

# Syria's

## Endangered Heritage

*An International Responsibility  
to Protect and Preserve*



**Franklin P. LAMB, PhD**

Translated by: Rasheed Abdul Hadi



**Syria's Endangered Heritage:  
An International Responsibility to Protect  
and Preserve  
2015**

***Franklin P. Lamb, PhD***

*Translated into Arabic by:*  
***Rasheed Abdul Hadi***

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# **Syria's Endangered Heritage: An International Responsibility to Protect and Preserve 2015**

**Franklin P. Lamb, PhD**

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# Dedication

In loving memory of Clyde Chester Lamb III  
Died April 18, 1983 US Embassy Beirut

Never will Clyde be forgotten. Nor the joy he was destined to bring many.

This volume is dedicated to the brightest lights of my life:

Alistair Xavier  
Louisa Amanda  
Fairouz Helen  
Helen Barbara

*May life's journey guide each of you to cross paths with the ten millennia of  
Cultural Heritage of Great Syria, our world's Cradle of Civilization.*

And may her noble people achieve the healing and enduring peace which  
is their birthright.

***Damascus***  
***February 26, 2015***

***Look back over the past, with its changing empires that rose and fell,  
and you can foresee the future, too.***

***-Marcus Aurelius-***

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# Acknowledgements

This project was inspired by friends in Syria whose deep love for their country and its cultural heritage at first puzzled me. From my experiences in this region and this country, I have come to learn about and value the deep bond that Middle Easterners generally, and Syrians particularly ,have with the many thousands of years of history and culture across this region. The connection between Syrians and their cultural heritage seems to me to be almost genetic. Different somehow ,from what I and many friends of mine feel for our, by comparison, very new country which we love but seemingly in different ways and to different degrees and without the same deep historic and archeological connections.

Syrians from across this great country unfailingly provided me, over the past two years with essential assistance on countless occasions. Examples are numerous and include my new friends among the Palmyra Museum officials, across the desert from Homs northeast of Damascus, and staff at various local government entities at several archeological sites: the Shrine to Sayyida Zeinab, the granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad south of Damascus, various locations in the old city of Damascus, such as the Umayyad Mosque and ancient Citadel, the much damaged ancient souks of Homs and Aleppo, to name just a few. With many other local officials and community activists, they often provided fascinating details about Syria's cultural heritage and the current dangers to her (and our) cultural heritage, which, for centuries if not millennia, has been located in their Governorates .

I thank the lovely and inspiring students and dedicated faculty from Damascus, Al Baath ,and Aleppo Universities and other institutions of learning in Syria, including Damascus public and private schools, and vital help from the general population. I am particularly indebted to Richard Edmonson, Miriam Adams, Professor Virginia Tilley, Ghada Jilani, Khaled Hiatlih, Rasha Haqi ,Reem Haddad of the Ministry of Information and Dr. Maamoun AbdulKarim and his staff at the Directorate General of Antiquates and Museums (DGAM), Alistair Xavier Lamb, Ms. Sawsan Fattoum and my dear

friend Ayman Talal al Nabhan for their generous editorial help and frequent counsel and assistance on many aspects of this project.

I wish to acknowledge, with thanks, the sundry military and security personnel at checkpoints around Syria who were always professional and courteous and unfailingly helpful about road conditions and potential dangers. The most frequent advice offered to the author, after looking at my passport and asking, usually good naturedly “What is an American doing around here”? was “stay off the roads after dark because there are bad people on your route ”! Their advice and extended friendship facilitated travel around Syria during the current crisis and were reassuring and much appreciated, even if I could not always follow their logistical advice given how quickly daylight passes these days, seemingly even faster in the desert somehow.

At some locations, such as the eleventh century Crusader fortress between Homs, Syria and the Lebanese mountains known as Krak des Chevaliers, the local commander “ Muhammad ” and his troops could not have been more helpful or entertaining as they generously offered enthralling tales from the rich history of the massive fortress built in the Middle Ages and the many roles it has played militarily and geopolitically over the past thousand years. Much valued informal seminars over cups of local tea and freshly picked mulberries, the latter which soldiers picked from bordering trees which some say were originally brought to the Middle East from Europe by the crusaders. I was briefed on details of a few battles over the past many months in the village’s surrounding Krak des Chevaliers, against various jihadist militias. I was shown the private quarters and fascinating personnel effects of the last of the ‘ Emirs of Krak des Chevaliers ,’ Abu Sulieman , before he ‘ escaped ’ back to Tripoli, Lebanon, only to be ambushed not far from the fortress by Syrian troops who laid a trap for him and his men, some with their families in tow, in early March .2014

I acknowledge with special thanks the cooperation of several dedicated staff members and officials at the Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Culture, and it’s Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM).

Syria’s indefatigable Minister of Tourism, H.E. Beshar Riad Yazji, was the first to encourage the author to attempt this project and his help has been indispensable. I shall always be much indebted to him .

Minister Yazji’s staff assistant, Ms. Nuha Makhoul could not have been

more supportive ,understanding, patient and reliable. I also deeply thank her colleagues, including Mr. Bassam Barsik.

My special thanks to the citizens and students of Syria whose love of their country and volunteer work and commitment is so evident these days as they courageously work to protect, preserve and restore the damaged cultural heritage of all of us.

This is their project.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to be part of it.

***Franklin Lamb***  
***Damascus - March 2015***

# Foreword

***By Eng. Beshar Riad Yazji***

*Minister of Tourism*

When the world considers Syria's ancient and venerable history, its many diverse peoples will come to understand why the Syrian people today so deeply cherish their country's cultural heritage. The dove and olive branch were first drawn here, as a symbol for peace to prohibit killing and assault in the Land of Mary. The world's oldest peace agreement was forged here in ancient times, to prohibit violence in accordance with the findings and discoveries of Tel Mardikh in Ebla. Syria is known as the Land of Heavenly Religions, the land of Prophets and Saints. In Damascus, one can imagine the echo of the steps of St. Paul the Apostle. In the Damascus countryside, nestled on the slopes of Al-Qalamoun Mountains, one can enter the ancient Christian village of Maaloula and hear the melody of spoken Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ.

In this land where the splendor of the past and beauty of the present mingle to form a panorama of beautiful, moving and fascinating sites for historians, pilgrims and tourists alike, it is no wonder that today the Syrian people patiently and courageously face and defy the international terrorist forces targeting their history, archaeological treasures and the cultural heritage they guard. How heartbreaking that, as we enter 2015, much of our cultural heritage, including our ancient churches and mosques, have been destroyed and desecrated. Our most spectacular monuments have been exposed, for the past four years of the Syrian Crisis, to massive damage and sabotage caused by armed extremist groups and to illicit and unauthorized excavations. Our shared global cultural heritage has been imperiled, damaged or even destroyed by the rampant looting, smuggling and trafficking in stolen irreplaceable artifacts, which are finally sold in auction houses in Europe and USA and other countries or on the international black market in antiquities.

But surely, just as Syria's landscape was the road for conversion by St. Paul the Apostle, who began his journey here carrying the torch of peace to the

whole world, today Syria can be the Road of Conversion for the whole world to confront and defeat this terrible threat of terrorism targeting our shared cultural heritage. For even as this war has created damaged and devastated great areas, it has also created legends of patriotism, endurance and resistance.

The government of the Syrian Arab Republic, and particularly the staff of its various ministries, including the Ministry of Tourism, have taken upon themselves the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of a number of cultural heritage sites. In this effort to prepare Syria once again to receive tourists, archaeologists, scholars, and journalists from around the world, Syria's people and government, propelled by an eternal love for this land, are today resisting the forces assaulting our country and its cultural heritage.

Our thanks are extended to Dr. Franklin Lamb and to his team for producing this valuable book. His courage in traveling across Syria, to some of the most dangerous places of the conflict, reflects his love for the Syrian people and his dedication drawing international attention to the nature of the crisis and the precarious threat it poses to our shared global heritage. We hope this work will inspire the international community and its governments to act responsibly, legally and morally but with new determination toward a genuine cessation of hostilities, including the looting of our cultural heritage. And we hope that ultimately, by helping others to recognize our common values in protecting the shared heritage of humanity, Dr. Lamb's book will contribute to restoring friendship among nations and peoples based upon mutual understanding and respect.





Eng. Beshar Riad Yazji,  
Minister of Tourism, in Ancient City of Aleppo

# Foreword

***By Prof. Dr .Maamoun Abdulkarim***

*General Director of Antiquities and Museums*

With the crisis in Syria entering its fourth year, the pain that Syrian people live with watching the details of their lives fall apart has become parallel to a heartrending cultural hemorrhage in the country as well, one whose negative impact and influence may linger forever.

Countless archaeological sites in the country are being systematically targeted by means of illegal excavations carried out by organized armed groups, while smuggling and illicit trafficking in pillaged artifacts—rare and extremely valuable commodities which often end up for sale in international markets—have become huge concerns as well. In addition, unique archaeological landmarks are subject to deliberate distortion and destruction for extremist purposes as a transformation of city centers into battlefields—in Homs ,Aleppo and elsewhere—also proceeds nonstop. These are cities that embody a cultural history, engraved in their every corner, dating back thousands of years. It is a vital and rich heritage that has always been the subject of admiration and respect around the world, as well as a source of pride for all Syrians, who have, throughout history, managed to protect it, yet it is a heritage now threatened by a veritable list of risks.

In deference to our responsibility towards the people of Syria, we at the Directorate—General of Antiquities and Museums) DGAM) in the Ministry of Culture find ourselves racing against time in an attempt to minimize the impact of the crisis, to lessen its repercussions on our antiquities, in the face of this ongoing deterioration. Toward that end, our main target is to bring all Syrians together under the goal of defending their antiquities, regardless of their different views, given that these antiquities belong to them first and foremost, and that they represent their common heritage and solidarity as a

people. Thanks to this approach ,DGAM has been able to perform its mission efficiently, with its cadres and staff members still united in the governorates. In addition ,its efforts have been quite successful in several areas, particularly in the matter of safeguarding museum holdings by transferring them to secure locations, an undertaking that has been deemed a victory by all measures.

But the protection provided by such preemptive interventions is not the only light in this dark tunnel. The willpower shown by members of the local community ,working in cooperation with DGAM cadres, has also played a crucial role, reducing the extent of damage and violation. Furthermore, solidarity with archaeological institutions and professional organizations additionally has made an enormous difference when the ‘ chips were down’ and DGAM found itself losing its own strong institutional presence due to the crisis. Hence a spirit of positivity, an awareness and faith of the community as regards the importance of safeguarding heritage—all of these things and more have helped in rescuing the largest number of sites and artifacts, thus ensuring the transmission of the shared memory, history and identity—as represented by this heritage—to future generations.

Despite these massive efforts, the magnitude of the risks threatening Syrian cultural heritage is beyond our capabilities and limited resources (though not our will). To be sure ,Syria’s antiquities depend upon the solidarity of all Syrians for their protection—but they also are in need of international action to support these local efforts. This is particularly true in the field of fighting illicit trafficking in Syrian cultural property. Taken altogether it is a challenge that must not only continue but also advance ,a struggle that must be expanded, a work that must be broadened and magnified, if we are to save a civilization worthy of life and respect, one which has given a lot to this world.

And so consequently comes the need to publish this book. This work contains within its leaves a non—Syrian perspective by Franklin Lamb, author and journalist, who has wandered in this land during hard times, inspected the status of its antiquities in their most fragile condition, and exerted great effort in the face of this attack upon heritage, accumulating information and presenting it in a manner that calls out to our sense of shared humanity .It makes this book incredibly important, a living testimony to the anguish of our antiquities, to blatant violations in front of which we should not remain silent. But it is also a book that hopefully will apprise the whole world of the role it has to play, as it reminds us that cultural heritage is

communal and global, and that the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage is a loss to humanity as a whole.



Prof. Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim - General Director of Antiquities and Museums - holding the Cultural Heritage Rescue Prize, 2014, in Venice, Italy

# Preface

***By Mr. Khaled Majed Hiatlih***

*Archaeologist*

Syria, located east of the Mediterranean, is one of the most important strategic regions in the world and the cradle of several civilizations. A natural museum open to the whole world, Syria is home to antiquities belonging to civilizations tracing from pre—history when the Neanderthals first appeared through the dawn of modern history with the discovery of the alphabet in Ugarit. These antiquities have survived many disasters and wars throughout history; nonetheless, they have stood firm against the storms of time in the same fashion that Syrians are currently showing such steadfastness. To date, archeological excavations are still providing museums with numerous treasures demonstrating the tremendous reservoir of the cultural heritage on the land of Syria. This cultural heritage belongs to all of humanity and requires preservation and maintenance during times of both war and peace.

In 2003, when Iraq was invaded and its museums pillaged and many historic sites and buildings destroyed, preceded by the war in Afghanistan and the Taliban's accompanying destruction of monuments nationwide, I set off in a quest to document what was happening. I was also tracing the stolen Iraqi artifacts smuggled to the European markets, although my work at the time was not so detailed. During my work at the Directorate—General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) in Damascus, I witnessed the love and care of Syrians for their cultural heritage and their insistence on protecting and preserving it. We were also working on developing this cultural heritage at all levels. Since the beginning of the current crisis in Syria, that has now passed its fifth year, I still feel the shock and can hardly believe that what is happening is real: that even while such a large number of the Syrian people have been killed, displaced, and compelled to leave their homes, Syrian

antiquities in various regions have also been subjected to theft and destruction. It even harder to believe that it is still happening.

Ancient cities such as Aleppo, Bosra, and Damascus, listed as World Heritage Sites; historical castles like Krak des Chevaliers, the Citadel of Salah Ed-Din, the Church of Saint Simeon Stylites, and Margat; the world's most renowned sites including Dura—Europos, Raqqa, Homs, Apamea, Ebla, and Mari and many others: all have been subjected, directly and indirectly, to the disastrous consequences of this bloody conflict. This crisis reached its peak in Ebla, Dura Europos, and Apamea. However ,the real catastrophe is centered in Aleppo. The Umayyad Mosque and its famous minaret, the Carlton Hotel, the ancient souks and other parts of the city have been almost completely destroyed. This disaster confronts us with a grave predicament regarding our ethical, legal, and historical responsibility whether as an international community or as workers in the field of archeology.

DGAM still plays its major and significant role in protecting this heritage by documenting the damage and designing plans matching its limited abilities to reduce the damage. That its role has been recognized at the international level is indicated partly by the award granted by the international archeological community to Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim, Director—General of Antiquities and Museums, the Cultural Heritage Rescue Prize for 2014. This award not only highlighted the damage taking place: it pushed the international community to help stop such damage, and spurs numerous Syrians and foreign archeologists to help as well. For we cannot fail to notice that Syrian local communities, fighting to preserve Syria's heritage, need help to curtail the damage and especially the illegal excavation and smuggling of antiquities outside Syria. We must therefore focus on the crucial role of neighboring countries in controlling their borders to stop the smuggling of antiquities and artifacts of Syria to Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon. And we must call to account those countries to which Syria's pillaged antiquities are smuggled to be auctioned or displayed in private museums.

In Syria's Endangered Heritage, Franklin Lamb presents to the world the dangers and threats besetting Syria's cultural heritage, which constitutes an essential part of the world's human heritage. He documents events on the ground by visiting the most important damaged sites in Aleppo, Homs, Palmyra, Damascus, and elsewhere and by tracking international reports, forums, and conferences concerned with Syria's archeological heritage. As an impartial chronicler, Dr. Lamb does not seek to identify the political party



responsible for the devastation of the ruins; rather, he endeavors to document the damage as well as efforts to repair it and stop further destruction. Highlighting the responsibility of the international organizations and cultural organizations under international law as expressed by international conventions and treaties, his book further clarifies the world's ethical and legal duty to help restore what has been destroyed, pillaged, and smuggled.

This book is therefore both a cornerstone and an important reference for coming books and research in this field. It should inspire all readers to support the Syrian people and DGAM to perform its solemn duty to protect Syria's heritage and archeological treasures.

# Introduction

Now in its fifth year, the Syrian conflict has turned into torrents of blood, pulling along scores of thousands of casualties, whose life stories one imagines, not even Scheherazade would be able to recount.

This volume was inspired by the spirit and resilience of the Syrian people, many of whom its author had the honor and pleasure of coming to know in the course of the past few years, years of hardship, as it happens, for a nation, rooted in the cradle of civilization, yet forced to summon all of its resources just to endure and survive—trying times in which not only did its people come under attack, but so did their, and the world's, cultural heritage.

For many centuries the people of Syria and their institutions of government have been the protectors and custodians of much of our world's heritage. Sites exist throughout the country containing antiquities, priceless treasures, from ancient Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman civilizations, dating back millennia. But today this rich heritage is under serious threat. In the view of Irina Bokova, director general of UNESCO, "damage to the heritage of a country" is damage to the soul of its people and its identity". Yet heritage destruction in Syria affects us all. If we think of human history collectively as a lepidopteran, drifting lazily from the flower of the Neolithic past, into the age of proto-writing, and finally early recorded history, then Syria and the Fertile Crescent stand out perhaps unique among regions of the earth. And damage to its soul is damage to our entire identity as a species. Destruction and looting of Syria's cultural heritage is happening *now*, and without more awareness and action by the global community it will likely continue. As such, the loss to our collective knowledge will be immense, for artifacts lose much of their educational value when removed or severed from their original context in the absence of proper scientific handling.

The conflict over the past three-plus years has spread to several regions; it is a crisis that has brought nearly unfathomable suffering to a noble people, cutting across religions, impacting every family and community throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, while reaching beyond the nation's borders as

well. Looting, smuggling, trading in illicit antiquities—such are byproducts of armed conflict, particularly in the Middle East, and slowly they are destroying our shared cultural heritage. When the fighting began in 2011, more than 80 professional archaeological teams were engaged at various sites throughout the country, exploring and investigating the remains of ancient civilizations, working to preserve this rich cultural heritage. Today these scientists and academics are gone. In their place are organized terrorist groups, many of them armed, who conduct clandestine excavations, seeking to profit by stripping and selling Syria's past.

The Syrian Ministry of Culture, along with its Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), presides over the nation's numerous historic sites. Six of these are listed as World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and as such are viewed as warranting international protections. Yet these sites, as DGAM has documented, are now being threatened, damaged, and in some cases substantially destroyed.

In world heritage research and stewardship a number of disciplines are attendant—from archaeological to biological sciences, from cultural landscaping to physics, to name but a few. Over the years, DGAM has maintained an excellent rapport with the scholarly and professional communities involved, and on July 21, 2014 the directorate issued a statement apprising them of the current situation. Overall, its assessment is rather bleak:

A year has passed since we last sent an international call out to all those concerned with defending Syria's heritage. At the time, we warned against a possible cultural disaster that might be inflicted on an invaluable part of the human heritage existing in Syria. We also added that the latest development of the painful events in Syria as well as the absence of the specialized government institutions and the archaeological authorities in some regions contributed greatly to the aggravation of the risk befalling the Syrian cultural heritage. Consequently, systematic clandestine excavations, carried out by professional armed gangs, doubled. In addition, smuggling cultural objects grew remarkably across borders seeing that the neighboring countries were not making enough efforts to put an end to smuggling taking place across their borders and within their territories.

Moreover, we pointed out that the increasing magnitude of the danger threatening the Syrian cultural heritage was beyond the DGAM's capabilities to

contain alone. We also called upon international organizations to support our national efforts to rescue our cultural heritage and prevent the occurrence of a painful cultural disaster affecting the human heritage as a whole together with its heart lying in Syria.

Much of what we had feared happened; for example, vast regions extending along the geography of Syria are now classified as ‘distressed cultural areas’ due to the exacerbation of the clandestine excavation crimes and deliberate damage to our historic monuments and cultural landmarks in those regions, such as southern Hasakah ,Deir ez-Zor Rural—Salhiya Euphrates“ Dura Europos ,”Idlib Rural—Ebla, some historic villages in the Dead Cities, a part of Aleppo Rural SAINT SIMEON CITADEL and its surroundings, Yarmuk Valley in Daraa, a part of Hama Rural—Apamee, etc.

Under all sorts of such dire and exceptional circumstances, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums is still carrying out its responsibilities, relying on the persistence of its devoted employees and armed with the will to defend Syria’s cultural heritage ,which is the unifying factor of all Syrians and the key component of their cultural and national memory. Its 2500 employees (archaeologists, engineers, legislators, inspectors, administrators, guards, etc.) are all over the different Syrian governorates. Most of them, as well ,are working tirelessly and diligently, and some of them have given up their lives for the sake of duty.

Thus ,we hope that those who are keen on our cultural heritage in Syria and the world will help us to protect and safeguard it, as much as possible, against imminent dangers, to prevent using it for cheap political purposes affecting its respectable world reputation and to lend a hand to the DGAM’s employees in order to enable them to resume their duties.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who have assisted us in the task of defending our heritage by means of their expertise, directions and support to our institutions and personnel. Hence, our special thanks go to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) UNESCO) and its regional offices, ICCROM ,ICCOM, ICOMOS) ,ARC-WH) and World Monuments Fund in New York, most of the archaeological expeditions working in Syria, some archaeologists, Associazione Priorità Cultura in Rome, the INTERPOL and World Customs.

Finally ,we would like to assure you that we will do our best and cooperate with dedicated people everywhere using all the energy and determination

available so as to protect and rescue our cultural heritage.

As the DGAM statement alludes, a main reason for the catastrophe we are witnessing is the short—term (and sometimes longer) loss of government control over key areas, a predicament that leaves heritage sites vulnerable to vandals, thieves, and heavy equipment excavators, while also opening them up for militias to use as camps or firing ranges .Complicating preservation efforts further is despoilment by forgers and looters ,smugglers of antiquities and black market operators, as well as extremist ideologues bent on the extirpation of priceless monuments. Such assaults have in the main been done with impunity, and the looting is continuing today. Without more awareness, without an effort at galvanizing the international public and their governments to act, these assaults on Syria’s cultural heritage will continue until little is left to be learned from the decontextualized and ravaged artifacts.

Attacks upon cultural heritage are attacks against the very identity of communities, and they can often serve to escalate conflicts while preventing reconciliation and a return to normality. This advocacy volume aims to help end this injurious and disfiguring onslaught against our global heritage. It presents the case for the international community acting on its moral and legal responsibility to preserve and protect, and also, where necessary ,to reconstruct damaged sites that for millennia have been in the custody of the Syrian people.

Protecting and preserving cultural heritage is a security issue alongside the protection of human life, a concept that stems from the 1949 Geneva Convention IV on the protection of civilians, the provisions of which are strictly binding on all nations through international customary law and also restated in the United Nations Charter. Whether it’s the Synagogue at Jobar, the Jewish wall paintings in the Damascus Museum, the Umayyad Mosque and the ancient Al-Zahrawi Souk in Aleppo, or the Monastery of St Sergius in Maaloula—all are accorded protection under international law.

The hope here is to advance the vision of a world in which looting and destruction of ancient sites and the marketing and collecting of undocumented artifacts becomes unthinkable. All people of good will must encourage legal and ethical behavior among collectors, dealers, and museums to stop the trade in illicit antiquities. If this advocacy brief encourages increased international awareness of the threats to archaeological sites in Syria it will have fulfilled its purpose, and if it also serves as a global

summons and clarion call to protect our collective global cultural heritage it will be a tribute to the many Syrian nationals whose help with its preparation was indispensable



# **Chapter 1**

## **Years of War in Syria**

### **Are Destroying Our Cultural Heritage**

*Damage to cultural heritage is a blow against the identity and history of the Syrian people it is a blow against the universal heritage of humanity.*

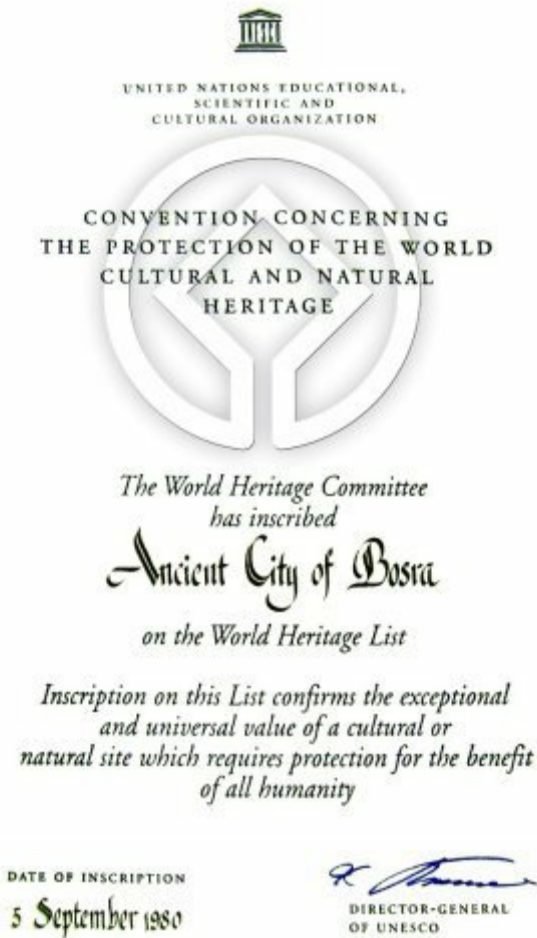
**-UNESCO Director Irina Bokova-**

## An Overview

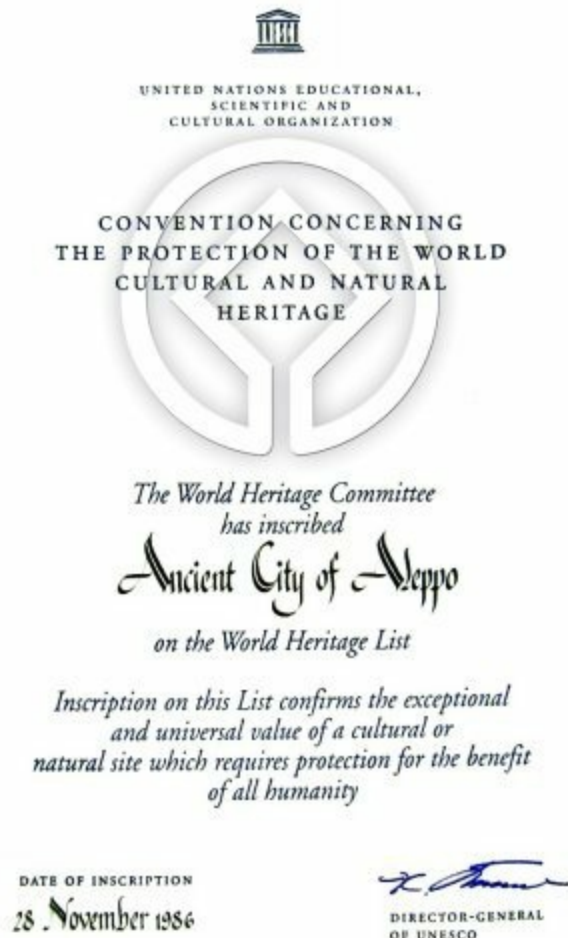
War exerts more than a human cost .Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in the spring of 2011, the country's cultural heritage sites have sustained repeated attacks, depredations and deliberate defacements. Museums have been pillaged ,historical monuments have been damaged or destroyed, while archaeological sites in areas of the country outside of government control have been gouged and lacerated with illegal excavations, often carried out by mafia—like gangs using heavy equipment, resulting in the plunder of artifacts—artifacts that in turn are smuggled out of the country, ending up in many cases in auction houses in places like London and New York. Blatant violations of international laws occur, while officials in the countries of transit or final destination often turn a blind eye. The result is a grievous and ongoing assault upon Syria's cultural heritage, which is the world's cultural heritage.

A number of agencies are playing a role in trying to stem this tide. At the international level this has included the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO ,which maintains a World Heritage List of sites regarded as having“ outstanding universal value ”.Six of these sites are in Syria, and all six have been officially classified as “endangered ”by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. The sites are: the Ancient City of Damascus ,Ancient City of Bosra, site of Palmyra, Ancient City of Aleppo ,Krak des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El Din ,and Ancient Villages of Northern Syria. The World Heritage Committee functions under the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention, and more specifically under the Convention's second protocol, adopted in) 1999 both of which are discussed more fully in Chapter .(2 While the Convention details the role each state party must play in the protection and preservation of its own World Heritage Sites ,Syria, due to the current conflict, has been unable to meet these obligations. Nonetheless, the World Heritage Committee, at its annual

meeting in 2013, took the welcomed step of deploring the conflict situation prevailing in the country and the loss of human lives, and also expressed concern at damage done to the nation's cultural heritage sites.



Inscription Certificate of the Ancient City of Bosra on the World Heritage List



Inscription Certificate of the Ancient City of Aleppo on the World Heritage List

At the national level, a number of Syrian governmental agencies have been involved in heritage preservation efforts as well. These include the Ministries of Culture and Tourism, but perhaps the most central role of all has been played by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), an agency headquartered in Damascus with a field staff of more than 2,500 working across Syria, often under dangerous conditions.

The scope of the responsibility of DGAM's staff includes undertaking repairs at heritage sites, where and when security conditions allow, and putting together tailored plans for restoration of damaged archaeological sites. Their work also includes maintenance and security at Syria's 38 museums, a protracted effort, often preemptive in nature, designed to shield

and secure contents at these locations. Mindful of what happened next door in Iraq's museums during the 2003 U.S. invasion ,DGAM went into action shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, securing treasures from virtually every museum in Syria, wrapping them in protective cloth, and storing them in secured places. All museums then installed heavy metal doors and increased security, often with the help of volunteers from local communities. Simultaneously, historic documents were taken to secured warehouses that provided fire protection and humidity controls.

Yet despite these valiant efforts the war has taken a toll. The following is a listing of each of Syria's museums. The rankings in the left hand column are based upon the size of the museum, visitor attendance and cultural importance of the exhibits. Some of the sites have been despoiled more than others, yet all have been affected in some way by the conflict.

Name of Museum	Location	Date Created	Class of Museum
Damascus Museums			
National Damascus Museum:	Damascus	7/10/1953	First class
Pre History Branch		“	
Classic Branch		“	
Oriental Branch		“	
Islamic Branch		“	
Modern Art Branch		“	
Azem Palace Museum– Folklore and Traditions Museum	Old Damascus	7/10/1953	First class
Damascene Traditional Museum	Damascus	22/4/1974	Second class
Arabic Calligraphy Museum	Old Damascus		Second class
Arab Medicine and Science Museum	Old Damascus		Second class
Khan As'ad Pasha	Old Damascus		Second class

Historical Documents Center	Damascus	31/12/1988	-
Damascus countryside Museums			
Deir Atiyah Museum	Deir Atiyah City		Second class
Al-Quneitra Museums			
Al-Quneitra National Museum	Al-Quneitra City	31/12/1992	Second class
Traditional & Folklore Museum at Quneitra City			Second class
Daraa Museums			
National Museum of Daraa	Daraa city		First class
Islamic Museum	Old house at Daraa city		Second class
Classic Museum	Bosra Amphitheater		Second class
Folklore Museum	Bosra Amphitheater		Second class
Al-Swaydaa Museums			
National Museum of al-Swaydaa	Swaydaa City	10/1953/ 7	First class
Shaba Museum	Shaba City		Second class
The Great Syrian Revolution Museum	Swaydaa City		First class
Homs Museums			
National Museum of Homs	Homs City		First class
Folklore & Traditional Museums	Al-Zahrawi Palace	31/12/1988	Second class
Palmyra Museum	Palmyra City	.7/10/1953	First class
Folklore & Traditional Museums at Palmyra		31/12/1988	Second class
Hama Museums			

Hama National Museum	Hama City		First class
Folklore & Traditional Museums	Hama City	31/12/1988	Second class
Mosaic Museum	Taybat al-Imam City		Second class
Apamee Museum	Apamee City		Second class
Idlib Museums			
Idlib National Museums	Idlib City		First class
Maarrat al-Nu'man Museum	Idlib City	8/2/1983	First class
Aleppo Museums			
National Aleppo Museum:	Aleppo City	.7/10/1953	First class
Pre History Branch			
Classic Branch			
Oriental Branch			
Islamic Branch			
Modern Art Branch			
Folklore and Traditions Museum	New Aleppo		Second class
Aleppo Citadel Museum		31/12/1988	First class
Aleppo Memorial Museum	Bimaristan Arghun	29/7/2007	Second class
Tartus Museums			
National Tartus Museum	Old City		First class
Arwad Island Museum	Arwad Citadel		First class
Saleh al-Ali Museum	House of Saleh al-Ali	.5/3/2008	Second class
Latakia Museums			

National Latakia museum	Latakia city		First class
Raqqa Museums			
National Raqqa Museum	Raqqa City		First class
Jaabar Castle Museum	Jaabar Castle		First class
Deir ez-Zor Museums			
National Deir ez-Zor Museum	Deir ez-Zor City		First class
Folklore and Traditions Museum	Deir ez-Zor City		Second class
Hasakah Museums			
National Hasakah Museum			First class

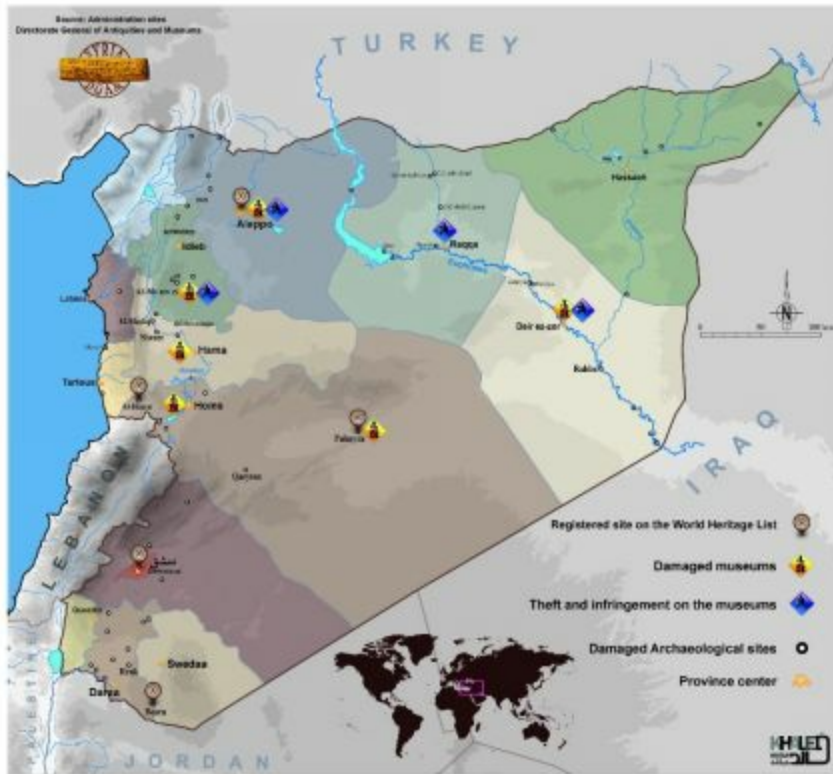


# **A Brief Survey of Syria's Museums**

## ***Physical Damage to Museums***

Considering the extent of the armed conflict raging across Syria, the museums listed in the chart above have to date survived in better shape than many archaeologists and the global public feared. Much misinformation has appeared in the mainstream media, and sometimes even disinformation, regarding damage to museums or heritage sites, and all too often reporting based upon political bias has prevented the public from obtaining an accurate picture. But as the war is ongoing, so too have been the struggles to preserve Syria's, and the world's, cultural heritage.

In addition to the aforementioned preemptive efforts at securing museum contents ,INTERPOL is regularly apprised regarding cultural property that *has* gone missing through instances of theft or illegal excavations. Receiving the cooperation of the army ,riot forces, police and customs agencies and governorate as well as municipal officials ,INTERPOL also works with international organizations, exchanging ideas and strategies on safeguarding Syria's antiquities. One such organization is the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) ,which, in cooperation with the Syrian government, has organized an e-learning course aimed at enhancing the skills of DGAM and other government personnel in“ Ways and Techniques for Protecting Cultural Heritage in Times of Conflict”.



Preliminary assessment of damage and thefts affecting  
Museums during the crisis

Moderate damage has affected the architectural structure of some museums, such as Aleppo Museum and Deir ez-Zor Museum, where windows and doors were smashed, along with the collapse of a ceiling in one case, all of this coming about mainly due to rockets and mortar shells landing nearby. There have also been thefts, including an Aramaic—period gilt bronze statue from the Hama Museum and a piece of marble stone from the nearby Apamee Museum.

#### **Other damage to museums include the following:**

The walls of Palmyra Museum were moderately damaged, sustaining some deep cracks after being hit by rockets fired from the neighboring orchards where rebels have been based. This author was briefed extensively at the site regarding emergency protection, reconstruction and rehabilitation measures, efforts that are continuing as of June 2014.

The Department of Antiquities in Maarrat al-Nu'man has confirmed damage to the museum's walls caused by fighting nearby.

In Hama, the Taybat al-Imam Museum suffered damage to its windows and doors, but its ancient mosaic panels have, to date, been untouched.

The folk art museums in Aleppo ,Homs and Deir ez-Zor have all been subject to some damage, but fortunately their contents had earlier been removed to secured vaults.

## ***Thefts from Museums***

The worst cases of theft to date have been in Raqqa, where warehouses and a bank were looted of archaeological artifacts, starting in the spring of 2012 when an armed group called Ahrar al Sham entered the Central Bank of Raqqa. Three boxes containing a total of 527 artifacts—all of it stored at the bank in a preemptive effort to protect it from looting—were removed by the gunmen, who transported the items to an unknown location under the pretext of protecting them.

Then just over a year later, in June 2013, robbers seized six boxes of artifacts from the Raqqa Museum's warehouses. Three of these turned up a short time later at a location in nearby Tabqa city. DGAM staff members were not able to recover or retake possession of them, though *were* allowed to view the boxes and their contents. But the worst was yet to come. In October 2013, more than 100 armed bandits broke into the warehouses of Herqla and stripped them of their contents. Hundreds of artifacts, including pottery and plaster ware, mosaics, and broken pottery pieces that are essential for research, were stolen—a calamitous event from a cultural standpoint given that the artifacts represented the results of excavations by trained archeologists from various sites in Raqqa over the past nearly three decades.

In light of these events, a decision was taken by DGAM to increase security at the nearby warehouses, but the Raqqa staff found itself subject to repeated threats as well as actual attacks in the course of trying to secure the building. At this point it was decided to empty the entire warehouse of its contents in favor of a new location, one that had been thought secure, but unfortunately, that site, too, ended up being looted by the same armed group invading the warehouses.

### **Thefts from other museums have included:**

Collections of replicas, not originals, stolen from the Dura Europos Museum, where some offices were also vandalized.

Historical and modern pistols and rifles, as well as silverware and silver jewelry from the Museum of Deir Atiyah—the items were taken by an armed group which stormed the museum on November 21, 2013, and occupied it until the Syrian army regained control two days later. The museum also

sustained some physical damage and destruction due to the clashes. Consequently ,DGAM closed the gates of the museum in an effort to allow the situation to calm down and also to carry out a full and detailed inventory of the museum's holdings.

17pieces of pottery in addition to some clay dolls stolen from the exhibition hall of Jaabar Castle.

Unconfirmed information on the theft of some of the assets of Homs Museum. However, the department confirmed that the situation was not grave.

30pieces of art stolen from Maarrat Museum in 2013 after an armed group stormed the premises. The pieces included small dolls and statues of clay and mud, broken pottery and amulets. (For more information regarding thefts from Syria's museums please visit the DGAM website about the damage in Aleppo :(www.dgam.gov.sy)

## ***Forgery of Antiquities***

An inspection of items recovered by police shows that artifact forgery, strictly forbidden under Syrian law, has become more prevalent. In addition to plundering archaeological sites, antiquities thieves seek additional profit by forging pieces of art and selling them as genuine. This practice seems to be occurring particularly with regard to mosaic panels and statues from Palmyra, but thefts and subsequent forgeries have taken place elsewhere as well. In November 2013, a team of DGAM experts conducted a study on a number of photos of mosaics believed to have been stolen from the Apamee site ;the study showed that most of them were fake, though the forgeries were of considerable quality and sophistication. In early ,2013 an armed group descended upon the Maarratt al-Nu'man Museum in Idlib, making off with 30 pieces of art, some of which were later forged. Antiquities forgery has been around for years and is punishable by law.



Forged mosaic confiscated on the Syrian border

## **Construction violations**

Limited space in this volume prohibits an itemized listing of construction violations occurring today due to acts of terrorism. Suffice to say that Syria's comprehensive building codes are being violated on a massive scale. Yet unlike other heritage—threatening activities, vandalism or looting for instance, illegal construction generally goes unreported by the public. As a consequence, some citizens have taken advantage of the absence of oversight to launch unauthorized construction projects, and in many cases, these projects negatively impact heritage sites. Some representative examples include the following:

### ***Al-Rafada and Set al-Roum***

Residents in the areas near these sites, north of Aleppo near Simeon Castle, have opened illegal quarries at the foot of Shaykh Barakat Mountain, which overlooks the town of Daret Azzeh. Additionally archaeological stones from the villages themselves are being dismantled and sold as stone blocks for construction. Located between Simeon Castle and al-Qatora, al-Rafada village is among 40 ancient villages in northern Syria that collectively were inscribed under UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2011 and which also include archaeological parks near the Limestone Massif. Known as the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (and also sometimes referred to as the Dead Cities), the site dates back to the Byzantine period, and the activity, if continued unabated, will significantly compromise it.



Construction violations in the Dead Cities (Serjilla)

### ***Manbej City and surrounding area***

Construction violations within residential communities near the tells (hills) surrounding Manbej City are occurring, with residents taking advantage of the current situation to construct rooms ,walls and buildings either on the archaeological hills themselves or in near proximity. Also, some are using archaeological stones for their construction projects, as well as growing seasonal trees and using the hills for burial—considered the least damaging in comparison to other violations.

### **Manbej City—western quarter**

The remains to entrances to cave cemeteries were destroyed during the construction of the foundation of a building in the western quarter of Manbej



City, just behind Mustafa al-Kabbar School. Two individual tombs made of limestone and containing no written or decorative elements are located there, while a cemetery was also discovered at a depth of six meters on the northern side of the site. The area is full of rubble now.

***Additional tells in the same general area:***

**Tell Ahmar** :construction violations as well as cultivation in some parts of the hill.

**Tell al-Aber** :the southern part has been subjected to construction as well as tree growing within the national mission's area. In contrast, the northern part, where a concerted effort was made to communicate to residents the site's significant historical value, remains in good condition.

**Tell Yasti and Tell al-Rafee** :both were subjected to plowing and cultivation of barley and olive trees.

**Tell Shiyukh Tahtani and Kherbet Nafakh** :violations of building codes occurred in both areas, where armed clashes are frequent and ongoing, making it nearly impossible to monitor construction violations.

# Jewish Cultural Heritage

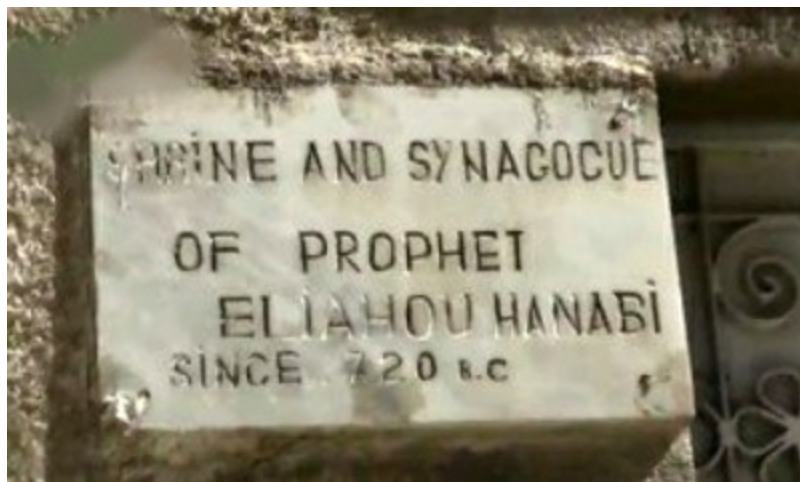
## *Jewish History in Syria*

Jews have lived in the region of the modern state of Syria since ancient times. They were comprised of two main groups: the Musta'arabi Jews, sometimes classified as Mizrahi Jews ,including those with an extended history in the Middle East and North Africa; and the Sephardi Jews, most of whom fled to Syria after the Catholic Monarchs of Spain Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon expelled or forcibly converted the Jews in 1492 in the Alhambra Decree ) also known as the Edict of Expulsion). For centuries, large Jewish communities lived in Aleppo (the Halabi Jews) and in Damascus (the Shami Jews). As recently as the 1930s, some 3000 Jews lived in Al Qamishli on the Turkish border near Nusaybin (the same area where, in March 2015 ,ISIS jihadists emptied more than thirty villages while desecrating ancient archeological treasure and enslaving and killing many Assyrian Christians in rampages reminiscent of Tamerlane or Genghis Khan.



Damage to Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue, located in the suburb of Jobar in Damascus

The modern Jewish population of Syria has reduced dramatically, however, due both to deteriorating economic conditions under late—Ottoman rule and later to ethnic conflict arising throughout the Middle East arising from the Arab—Israeli conflict. In the first half of the twentieth century, many Syrian Jews, like many other people in the Levant, emigrated to the U.S. and Latin America due to economic hardship. Others left to join the early Zionist movement in Palestine and more emigrated to Israel after it became a recognized state in 1949. Most of the remaining Jews left Syria after the 1973 war between Israel and frontline Arab states, in which Syria played a major role. In November 1989, the Syrian government facilitated the emigration of 500 single Jewish women, who greatly outnumbered eligible Jewish men in Aleppo. During the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, Syria agreed to ease restrictions on its Jewish population and the Syrian government allowed Jews to leave Syria on condition that they not immigrate to Israel. Beginning on the Passover Holiday of 1992, more than 4,000 remaining members of the Aleppo, Damascus and Qamishli Jewish community were granted exit permits and within a few months thousands left for the United States, mainly to Brooklyn, New York, which already had a large Syrian—Jewish community, and to France or Turkey. Approximately three hundred remained in Syria, most of them elderly, all choosing to stay in the culture their families had lived in for many generations. For decades, every two or three months, a rabbi from Istanbul visited Aleppo to oversee the preparation of kosher meat, which most residents froze and used until his next visit.



One of the most historically significant Jewish heritage sites in Syria is the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue, located in the Damascus suburb of Jobar.



The above photos purport to show the courtyard of the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in late May 2014  
Photo credits: The Daily Beast to the author

By the twenty—first century, only a small, largely elderly Jewish community still lived in formerly vibrant Jewish neighborhoods such as in Aleppo. Jews were still officially banned by Syrian law from politics and government employment and were exempt from military service obligations. Jews were also the only minority to have their religion mentioned on their passports and identification cards. Some Jews were also occasionally subjected to harassment by Palestinian protesters ,especially during peaks of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Syrian government took measures to protect them: for example, by protecting Jewish primary schools for religious studies and permitting Modern Hebrew to be taught in schools. (Today Hebrew is one of the languages in which SANA, the government —sponsored Syrian News Agency, presents its news). Still the remaining Jewish community continued to shrink. From 2000 to 2010, forty—one Syrian Jews left for occupied Palestine, and the community’s numbers further dwindled as members of the largely elderly community died. In 2001, Rabbi

Huder Shahada Kabariti estimated that there were still two hundred Jews in the country, of whom 150 lived in Damascus ,thirty in Aleppo and twenty in Qamashli. In 2003, the Jewish population was estimated to be fewer than one hundred. In 2005, the U.S. State Department estimated the Jewish population at eighty in its annual International Religious Freedom Report. In May 2012, one year into the Syrian crisis, it was reported that only twenty two Jews still lived in Syria, all of them elderly and living in Damascus in a building adjoining the city's only functioning synagogue. In March ,2015Rabbi Avraham Hamra reported that just four Jews, all over sixty years of age, still lived in Aleppo and fewer than a dozen Jews were left in Syria.

### ***The Fate of Jewish Synagogues in Syria***

Much uncertainty, concern and conflicting reports have been issued about the condition of synagogues and other Jewish cultural heritage in Syria since Syria's domestic security crisis began in March 2011. Particularly important are Syria's Jewish synagogues. Field visits by the author and testimony of neighbors near some of Aleppo's eleven synagogues confirm that while they, as with many sites in Syria, are currently endangered, as of late February 2015 these places of worship show no sign of vandalism. On the contrary, they are seen as a valued part of Syria's cultural heritage and the Syrian government and people have preserved and repaired them when necessary. For example, in February of 2011 ,a month before the current Syrian crisis, President Bashar Assad signed an executive order to repair the Al-Raqi Synagogue in the old Jewish quarter of Damascus as the renovation of ten other synagogues in Syria's major cities continued .In December 2014, the author photographed some randomly selected Aleppo synagogues, including the one in the Samoual district, found them locked and saw no signs of desecration. Rather, neighborhood citizens express protective attitudes toward these global cultural heritage sites and even tend to keep the outside areas cleared of leaves and trash .Government workers also perform daily trash pickups along streets where the synagogues are located. Officials advised the author that Syria values the rebuilding of Jewish sites in Damascus and repairs to synagogues across Syria, in order to preserve the secularism of Syria and its culture heritage of which Jews were historically an important part.

For this volume, strenuous efforts were made to confirm the actual

condition of synagogues in Syria, but security conditions prevented the author from personally visiting all for which damage has been reported. Where field visits could be conducted, however, reports of destruction were found to be greatly exaggerated or untrue.

### ***The Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue***

One of the most historically significant Jewish sites in Syria is the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue, located in the Damascus suburb of Jobar. The synagogue is some four—hundred years old, and is said to be built upon a cave where the prophet Elijah once took refuge. For centuries Jobar was inhabited by a peaceful and mixed community of Muslims, Christians and Jews, many of whom often attended events together at the synagogue.

Unfortunately, the synagogue is located at a crossroads in an area that has been occupied by rebel forces since the beginning of the conflict, which meant it has been at high risk of damage. Its status, as of March 2015, was uncertain due to continuing rebel control of the area. With each shelling of the district, claims were made that the synagogue had been sabotaged by government forces. One such report, published on 1 April 2013 by the Times of Israel and widely circulated by Zionist media outlets, claimed that the synagogue had been “looted and burned to the ground by government forces”. In May 2014, the US website The Daily Beast published photos purporting to show rubble documenting the synagogue’s destruction.

The 2013 claims appear to be entirely false. For one thing, claims of Syrian military damage to the synagogue are entirely unsupportable because no Syrian government forces have been present in Jobar since the conflict began. For another, by March 2014 (nearly a year after the initial report), media stories conceded that the synagogue was still standing, with only minor damage, and that some of its contents are still in good condition. It has certainly suffered from the conflict: although the author was unable to gain permission to visit the site due to the security situation, credible reports in April 2014 recounted that artifacts, including gold chandeliers and icons, were stolen from the synagogue early in the conflict and offered for sale, and moderate damage to exterior walls was sustained as well. But no report has confirmed either total destruction of the building or that thousands of manuscripts, including Bibles, were looted from the synagogue. On the contrary, many documents, including Bibles and other artifacts, were transferred earlier in the conflict by the local Jobar Council, with the full cooperation of the Syrian government,



to an Ottomanera synagogue in the Old City of Damascus for safe keeping. That site, which this observer has visited many times, is encompassed within a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and benefits from round—the—clock government security. The relocation of these items was part of a series of preemptive steps, described elsewhere in this volume, undertaken at Syrian museums and other heritage sites at the outset of the conflict.

### ***The Great Synagogue of Aleppo***

Similar false reports have circulated about the Great Synagogue of Aleppo, built in the a fifth or sixth—century Byzantium era and known locally as Joab's Synagogue or Al-Bandara Synagogue .The building's foundation was laid by King David's general, Yoav, held in Jewish tradition as the commander who held captured Aleppo. Maimonides, in his letter to the rabbis of Lunel ,speaks of Aleppo as being the only community in Syria where Torah learning survived. As recently as two decades ago, it was in use until Aleppo's remaining Jews left.



In March 2014, nearly a year after the initial report, media stories conceded that the synagogue was still standing ,with only

minor damage, and that its contents appeared to be in good condition.

During the current conflict, questions have repeatedly surfaced regarding this synagogue's status .The Times of Israel reported on 10/16/2012 that "Aleppo, once a trading center for Muslims ,Armenians and Syrian Christians, was also home to one of the world's oldest Jewish communities with its Great Synagogue, which is now destroyed ".The Jewish Anti—Defamation League (ADL) continues to claim that the Synagogue was bombed by the Syrian army, and similar false reports have circulated via what may be politically motivated Internet conspiracy theories. Another writer for the Jewish Times lamented“ :While we continue to hear of the damage inflicted on Aleppo, it is almost unfathomable what is happening to its treasure trove of Jewish antiquity and Synagogues within its borders”.



The Great Synagogue of Aleppo: As of March 2015 only slight damage confirmed

Nonetheless, although it is situated on the current front line separating rebel from government forces, as of March 2015 the Great Synagogue of Aleppo shows no signs of damage. This may partly trace to the fact that both sides in Syria's crisis have been criticized for endangering Syria's heritage and, with the exception of Da'ish (IS), appear to be taking greater care in selecting "military "targets. Another reason may be because the Great Synagogue is located on a side street of little apparent strategic import that has experienced no armed conflict. As with other Jewish sites in Aleppo and across Syria,



including cemeteries, schools and communal properties, it is currently under government protection.

### ***The Dura Europos Synagogue***

Another instance of conflicting accounts is the condition of the ancient Dura Europos Synagogue, reported by the Israeli National News service in December 2014 as having been seized by ISIS, its fate“ unknown”. Discovered in 1920, excavated in 1932, it transferred to the National Museum in Damascus starting in 1936, with its magnificent seven—meter walls intact. This synagogue has an inscribed ceiling which revealed that it was refurbished and enlarged by the leader of the Jewish community, Samuel, in 244 CE. Its frescoes, added in 249-250 CE to cover all four walls in five horizontal bands, showed scenes of Saul anointing David, the Book of Esther’s Mordechai riding triumphant, Baby Moses in the basket and Elijah restoring the widow’s son to life, offering precious glimpses into a lost third —century Judaism.



The Dura Europa Synagogue was discovered in 1920 and excavated in 1932 with its magnificent seven-meter walls intact



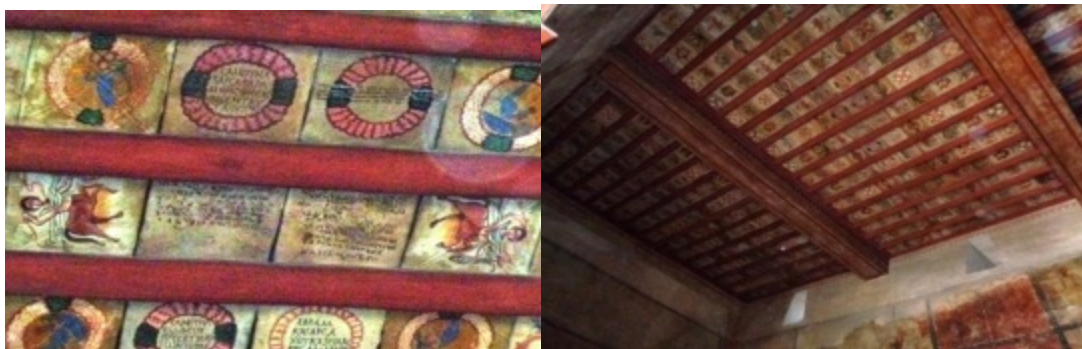
The woman's entrance to the Dura Europos Synagogue (Photo: Alistair Lamb 2/22/15)

Despite the ominous reports, the Dura Europa Synagogue is not in danger nor has it been destroyed. It was transferred to, and remains safely housed and exhibited in, a special classical section of the Syrian National Museum in Damascus. Although this section has been closed for security reasons for nearly three years, it was visited by the author in February 2015 through a special arrangement by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museum.





The Dura Europos frescoes have been called“ the most exciting and revolutionary discovery of early Jewish Art .”They derive from one of the oldest synagogues in the world, and present a unique example of a hybrid Greco—Roman, Semitic and Iranian art .



Wall and ceiling frescos inside the Dura Europos synagogue, now under protection in the National Museum in Damascus (Photos: Alistair Lamb 2/22/2015).

The synagogue in Dura Europos had survived many centuries in such good condition significantly because of its location, near a small Roman garrison on the Euphrates River. Parts of the building ,which abutted the main city wall, were requisitioned by the Roman army and filled with sand as a defensive measure against northern and eastern marauders. The city was abandoned after Rome’s fall ,never to be resettled, and the lower walls of the rooms remained buried and largely intact until excavated. The archaeological dig discovered many Jewish wall—paintings and also Christian texts written in Hebrew. Especially interesting perhaps was the discovery of paintings in the synagogue depicting limited aspects of Mithraism, a religion practiced in the Roman Empire between the first and fourth centuries that was popular within the ranks of the Roman legions.

Named for the Persian god Mithra, the cult was followed by many Syrians and some Roman senators who resisted the spread of Christianity .

### ***Other Jewish Heritage***

False reports about damage to Syria's synagogues suggest caution regarding reports of damage to other Jewish cultural heritage in Syria, as well as the climate of unfettered anti—Jewish violence that these reports sometimes allege .For example, articles and media reports about Jewish material culture in Syria have appeared with titles like“ What's left of Jewish Heritage in Syria“ ,”Who will save the remains of Syria's ancient synagogues) ”?JTA“ ,(Jewish Aleppo, Lost Forever: The Syrian diaspora in Israel watches its once—vibrant ancestral home fall to ruin in the country's civil war ”(Joseph Dana 8/22/2012). These reports are misleading, partly because the reduction of the Jewish community in Syria traces mostly to events before the war, partly because the damage is less than reported, and partly because, as with the Aleppo Codex (described below), the decimation of Jewish heritage in Syria traces partly to a concerted Israeli project to transfer Syria's Jewish heritage to Israeli hands .

For example, during a ten—year period in the 1980s, a collection of Jewish objects were stolen and smuggled out of Syria to Turkey by then—Chief Rabbi Avraham Hamra. The collection included nine ancient Bible manuscripts, known as the Ketarim, each between 700 and 900 years old, forty Torah scrolls and 32 decorative boxes in which the Sephardic Torah scrolls were held .Israel offered a bizarre rationale that the thefts of antiquities belonging to Syria were“ necessary because official requests for permission to take them out of Syria were denied .”Were this excuse to be accepted, our global heritage in Syria and elsewhere would likely soon disappear.

### ***The Aleppo Codex***

An example of such twisted history is the supposed fate of the Aleppo Codex. Considered by some experts to be the most authoritative and accurate source document both for the Biblical text and for its vocalization and cantillation, the Codex is considered by some scholars to have greater religious and scholarly import than any other manuscript of the Bible. In



November 2012, Susan Harris alleged massive damage in Syria to Jewish heritage sites and implied that the Codex had succumbed to “the eye of a hurricane swept in by the Arab Spring” including a frenzy of anti—Jewish sabotage, including a “labyrinth of medieval Jewish structures recently set ablaze” such that the Codex had been reduced to “ash heaps under the weight of prolonged violence).” The Tablet, August 23, 2012 by Joseph Dana(

Yet the Codex has not been burned. It was stolen from the Great Synagogue of Aleppo—according to locals, by the Mossad—and in 1957 was smuggled to Israel, where it was presented in 1958 to President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Today the Aleppo Codex is safely housed in the Ben-Zvi Institute .



The author outside the Samoual Synagogue in Aleppo, 12/14/2014. (Photo: Alistair Lamb)

Unbeknownst to the thieves, however, 295 of the original 487 leaves of the Codex remain in Aleppo near the grand synagogue where they are protected by a Syrian who has volunteered as caretaker and groundskeeper for many years. Apparently when the thieves pried open the vault underneath the basilica’s basement floor, they failed to notice a cloth wrapping underneath the materials they stole or that the Codex had been divided for study. The people of Syria and all who value cultural heritage await the return of the

looted Codex to its true custodians, the people of Syria.

## **Syrian Efforts to Preserve Jewish Heritage**

Beyond those items already mentioned, the National Museum of Syria currently protects many Jewish—Syrian antiquities, including Old —Testament—themed paintings. At the time of publication ,prominent examples of these include :

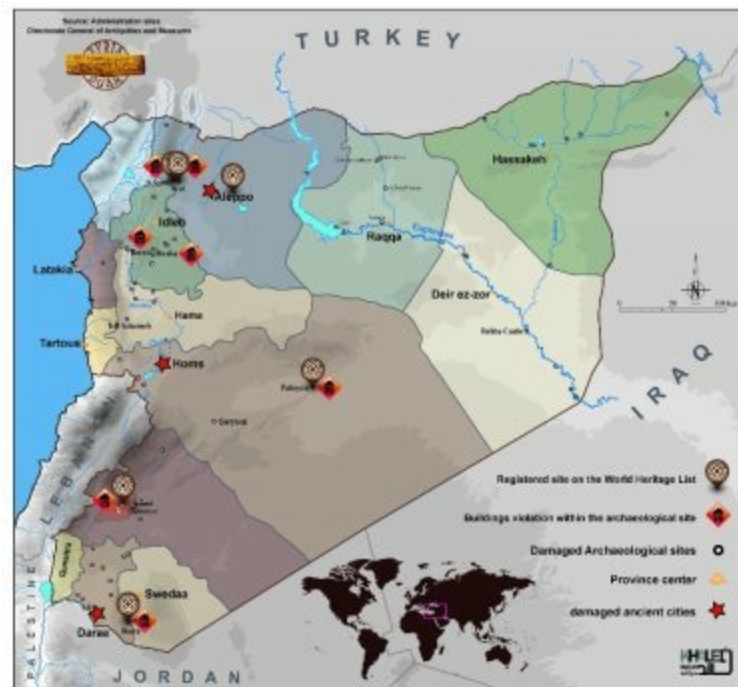
- The Torah niche from the ancient Synagogue of Dura Europos, on which appear drawings of the Prophet Abraham, including the scene of his offering his son. Beside them are the temple façade and a drawing of the Jewish menorah .
- A drawing featuring the Prophet Ezra reading a papyrus, Prophet Moses in the flames of boxthorn, the Ark of the Covenant in the hands of Philistines, and David anointed by Samuel as a king .
- A number of paintings with themes from the Old Testament
- A drawing of the pharaoh and Moses as a child and a beautiful painting of Abraham between the two symbols of the sun and the moon .
- A drawing representing the story of Mordechai and Esther and another of Elijah bringing life back to a baby. From the author's experience, the great majority of Syrians are deeply connected with their cultural heritage and do not distinguish much among its diverse origins .

As this volume has documented, most Syrians are proud to help others protect and rebuild their damaged religious and cultural sites and this mission is often a unifying factor among this besieged population. To take one example, the author was served tea one day by some members of the Jewish community in the old City of Damascus, whose apartment is near where tradition holds that St. Paul converted to Christianity. These gracious elderly residents strongly maintained that Jewish cultural heritage in Syria is being respected, protected and preserved in Syria with the same care as Muslim, Christian, and pagan antiquities.

# Debasement of archaeological sites and damage to historic neighborhoods

In a number of locales within the Syrian Arab Republic, archaeological sites have themselves become intense battlefields. The predictable damage, sometimes near total, is frequently in tandem with organized illegal excavations. Often these are fierce digs, carried out by internationally—dispatched thieves carrying maps and equipped with buried—artifact detectors. Earth moving equipment is often brought in as well, and the activity usually occurs close to border areas, where looted artifacts can be quickly transported across unmanned border crossings into neighboring countries for waiting markets.

Some sites have become armed camps, used to train fighters in use of weapons and explosives, while some also, tragically, have been targeted for purely ideological reasons.



Preliminary assessment of construction violations



Documented cases of illegal excavations and vandalism include the following cases:

### ***Hasakah***

Local authorities reported in May of 2014 that the Tell Hamoukar archaeological site has been damaged, while nearby hills were secretly excavated. An illegal excavation using heavy equipment has also taken place at Tell Ajaja ,located in the south of the province, but the area has for the most part been inaccessible due to control by armed groups. In the northern part of Hasakah, containing some of the country's most sensitive sites and where Syrian and foreign missions have been conducting explorations for years ,the situation, though not quite as bad, is still perilous .Control of the area has shifted back and forth between the government and armed groups, and while prime sites such as Tell Mozan ,Tell Leilan ,Tell Beydar, and Tell Arbeed remain in good condition, Tells Berry, Brak, and Halaf have all undergone illegal excavations. Additionally, the residence of the British archaeological mission working at the hill of Tell Brak was plundered of equipment and some wooden logs.



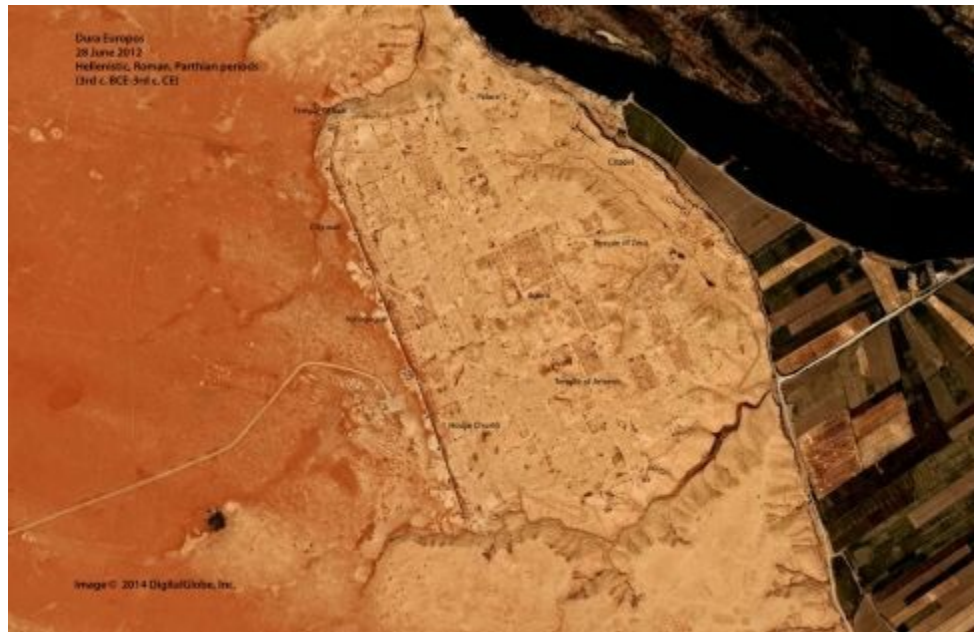
Assyrian Archaeological statue illegally excavated from Tell Ajajeh in Hasakah Governorate

## Deir ez-Zor/ Dura Europos

Widespread illegal excavations have occurred in addition to theft of equipment belonging to the mission working at the Dura Europos site. Also, as previously mentioned ,collections were stolen from the Dura Europos Museum while illegal construction has been carried out.

Elsewhere in Deir ez-Zor ,thieves managed to steal the gates of the entrances to towers at the Halbia historic site, while the excavation tools of the Syrian—French archaeological expedition working there along with a caravan owned by the Directorate of Tourism were stolen as well. And at the archaeological site of Mari and at Tell Hariri, the mission's accommodations and the visitors center were burgled. Archaeological sites from Maadan west to the city of al-Bukamal have also been subjected to secret digging operations.





Satellite images taken before the crisis showing damage (illegal excavation) at Salhiya Euphrates ,Dura Europos ,Deir ez-Zor, northern Syria

## Idlib

Digging operations became chronic at the Ebla archaeological site by the end of December 2012. However, according to reports from Idlib's Directorate of Antiquities, illegal excavations are presently declining due primarily to efforts by the local community, whose members have undertaken to secure artifacts at hidden locations. But the damage previously sustained was extensive. Modern facilities at the site have been hit, including a cafeteria at the entrance to the northern hill and the newly constructed visitor's center southwest of the site. Additionally, Ebla has sustained damage at the following sectors:

**The Acropolis** :dozens of random holes were dug across the courtyards of the Royal Palace, especially near the archive room. Thieves attempted to enter by digging underneath walls in order to reach older levels not yet explored. A basalt staircase in the administrative suite of the palace was also destroyed, again with the purpose of penetrating layers. Other historic levels were sabotaged in parts of the palace, while less damaging diggings took place at the top of the acropolis. Wells were also searched, though they had been previously excavated by foreign archaeological missions.



In the **Northern Palace** the Great Temple of Ishtar was subjected to digging operations in some of its halls. Also wells were searched, though again they had been previously excavated.

Located in the slope of the Acropolis, the **Southern Palace** suffered vandalism and some minor diggings, though these did not affect the building, and restoration plans are in place.

At the **Temple of the Rock** ,a significant Bronze Age temple, one hole was dug and one well was searched



Various illegal excavation at Tell Mardikh, Ebla ,Idlib

A detailed report by the Department of Archaeological Parks in Idlib, made available to the author, offers an assessment of the archaeological parks in Idlib that were incorporated into UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites as part of the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria. All the parks are in good shape with the exception of one ,**Jabal al-Zawiya Park** ,which has sustained damage at the following locations:

**Al-Bara site** :Three stone sarcophagi inside the pyramid tomb were broken

into, while a gate lintel and the door of an olive oil mill were also damaged. Four historic crowns have also been stolen. Some local people are living in 15 caves, where they are refurbishing several rock—engraved Byzantine tombs .Front areas of the site were damaged, including parts of Abi Sufyan Castle, the eastern façade of one of the five churches, the eastern façade of the monastery, and two pyramidal burial chambers, Mazuqa and Sawmaa.



Destruction occurring in pyramidal tombs





Destruction occurring in pyramidal tombs

**Sergella site** :The sarcophagus at the entrance to the site has sustained damage, while some sign boards were broken. Villagers from Kafr Roma have also occupied approximately 10 historic houses at the site, while the office, electricity room, and ticket office were broken into.

**Wadi Martahun, Magelya, Batirsa, Bshilla, Bauda, and DeLozeh sites:** Some refugees have moved into and refurbished seven caves, while some

illegal excavations have taken place

Located in the country's vast Limestone Massif, the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria ,also known as the ' Dead Cities ',comprise some 40 villages in all, grouped into eight separate archaeological parks. The area serves as a glimpse into rural and village life in late antiquity during the Byzantine period. Happily, the remaining parks ,including Jabal Barisha, and Jabal al-Woastani, have suffered little to no damage.

## **Aleppo**

Roughly 350 km north of Damascus ,Aleppo is the largest city in Syria and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, dating back to the sixth millennium BC. It is mentioned in the tablets of Ur, Ebla, and Ugarit, and grew into a vital trade center, chiefly because of its fertility as well as its strategic position at a crossroad on the major caravan route. At various times in history it has been ruled by the Akkadians, the Amorites, Hittites, Aramaeans, and by Alexander the Great. Roman control lasted for 600 years ,and in Islamic times Aleppo came under the rule of Saladin and the Ayyubids starting in 1183.





Destruction at the Umayyad Mosque (Great Mosque) in the Ancient City of Aleppo

In the present conflict the city has been a major battle zone. The Directorate of Antiquities of Aleppo has confirmed the destruction of the minaret of the Great Umayyad Mosque, one of the most important archaeological mosques in Syria. Part of the Ancient City of Aleppo, the mosque, too, is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In addition to the destruction of the minaret, an armed group disassembled a wooden minbar (a raised platform) in the mosque, claiming to be transferring it to another, safer location, but the transfer was made without the knowledge of the proper archaeological authorities, and the minbar's present whereabouts is unknown. The mosque has also sustained structural damage as well as damage to the interior, though detailed information is difficult to come by due to the security situation. (Events at the mosque, as well as the site's historical significance, are discussed more fully in chapter 4.)



Damage in the old souks of the Ancient City of Aleppo

Hundreds of historic antique shops were burned down in Old Aleppo souks such as al-Zerb, al-Obbi, al-Atme, al-Attareen, al-Niswan, al-Soof, and al-Sagha ,while the historic Carlton Hotel was destroyed in mid—May.2014 Additionally, the Bimaristan Arghun (also known as the Museum of Medicine and Science) sustained serious damage, but once again ,security conditions are preventing access to the site. Other damaged sites in the Old City include the Castle of Aleppo ,whose northern town was damaged by bombing and which also sustained damage to the entrance. The castle's northern tower was partially destroyed by bombing, and also sustained damage to the entrance.



Damage in the old souks of the Ancient City of Aleppo

Elsewhere in Aleppo Governorate ,the al-Dederiyeh Cave in Mount Simeon was deliberately sabotaged, including the excavation and archaeological areas previously explored by the mission working there. In the same location looting also took place of excavation equipment ,wooden columns and boards.



The author with Dr. M.B. Shabani, Director of the Aleppo National Museum on 12/10/14 during a briefing on measures being taken by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) to protect the contents of Syria's 32 national museums.

## Damascus, Old City

Syria's capital sits in an oasis fed by the Barada River, whose basin may

have been occupied by humans as far back as 9,000 BC. The city was mentioned in the Mari tablets, circa 2500 BC ,referred to as *Dimashqa* ,and a little later—as *Dimaski*—in the Ebla archives, and is today home of the Umayyad Mosque, also known as the Grand Mosque of Damascus, one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world and the first monumental work of architecture in Islamic history. Ruled at various times by the Aramaeans, Assyrians, and the Greeks, Damascus was annexed by the Roman general Pompey in 64 BC, after which it was incorporated into a league of ten cities known as the Decapolis. Upon visiting the city in 1867, Mark Twain wrote:

- Damascus has seen all that has ever occurred on earth ,and still she lives. She has looked upon the dry bones of a thousand empires, and will see the tombs of a thousand more before she dies. Though another claims the name, old Damascus is by right the Eternal City.
- In the present conflict, parts of the old city have been hit by mortar fire, including an archaeological buffer zone ,as well as several historical districts outside the walled city .The following was documented by Damascus Antiquities from January 1 thru July 17, 2014:
- In the Bab Tuma neighborhood, mortars hit at several points along the main street, resulting in minor damage to privately owned properties, including the Albaal restaurant ,located in front of Al-Assia School;
- The Al-Adilya Madrasa, in the Bab al Bareed neighborhood near the Umayyad Mosque, was hit by mortar shells, causing minor damage to the brick roof; and in the same neighborhood mortar fire also struck Jaqmaqiyeh madrasa (the Museum of Arabic Calligraphy), resulting in blown out windows and cracks in the walls;
- Mortar fire near Saladin’s Tomb resulted in damage to the façade of one of the shops;
- Mortar shells struck several shops in Jewish sections northeast of the walled city, particularly in the Kharab district, while traditional houses collapsed or were damaged in the neighborhoods of Harika, Mezzeh and Al Shahem;
- Two mortar rounds hit the Jura neighborhood, the first blowing out windows and damaging a hall in the Al Manar School, the second striking a privately owned house, causing cracks to the outside wall;



- Damage in the al Qanawat historical district, outside the walled city with the Al Saada School sustaining damage to its windows and roof



Damage affecting the large mosaic decorating the exterior façade at Umayyad Mosque in the Ancient City of Damascus

In addition to the above, the nearly 1300—year—old Grand Mosque itself was hit by mortar rounds fired from rebel—held areas of the East Ghouta suburb in November of 2013, with one of the shells inflicting a direct hit upon the large mosaic decorating the external façade. Damages at the mosque ,as well as subsequent restoration efforts, are discussed more fully in chapter 3.

## **Hama Governorate**

The ruins of the ancient city of Apamee rest on a rise overlooking the Ghab Valley, some 60 km northwest of the city of Hama .Apamee was founded by Seleucus I Nicator, a former general of, and successor to, Alexander the Great, and the city became the military capital of the Seleucid Empire.

Apamee site has been one of those most extensively affected by vandalism and illegal excavation, and there are reports of continued digging operations in the east, northeast, and west of the governorate .Additionally, hundreds of construction stones have been stolen from the al-Andrine historic site.

Hama is also home to more than 17 hydraulic water wheels, known as noria, that have been submitted as tentative World Heritage sites under UNESCO's criteria of representing“ a masterpiece of human creative genius ”.Situating along the Orontes River, the noria were constructed for purpose of irrigating nearby fields, and as such represent a significant stage of human history. A mosaic found at Apamee, dating to 469 CE, pictures a noria very similar to those at Hama and today is displayed in the Hama Museum .Distressingly, however, on August 8, 2014, one of the main wheels, the Noria Gaabariyya, near the Al Nori Mosque, was subjected to an arson attack by an unknown group. The fire burned the upper part of a new wooden wheel ,while the initial stone base remained intact.





Satellite images showing the magnitude of illegal excavation in the archaeological city of Apamea/Image A shows the site in 2011.  
Image B shows the site in 2012

## Homs

Local legend has it that it was in the Syrian Desert near present day Aleppo, some Egyptians claim otherwise, that a bird of unsurpassed beauty without equal lived for centuries and then suddenly experienced ferocious immolation. Miraculously to emerge from its still smoldering ashes with restored and even enhanced majesty.

Visiting sites of four years of war damaged archeological treasures in Syria one witnesses some fairly massive destruction, some of which has been reported in the international media. But the visitor also comes upon stunning if, yet still relatively modest, progress that many local communities are making in protecting and restoring mankind's shared global cultural heritage. Voluntary work and dedication in the midst of war and frequent mayhem.

To date these measures are mainly local initiatives relying on limited community resources with government encouragement, toughened looting laws and rigorous enforcement and facilitating local communities with repair and reconstruction permits. While simultaneously, the Directorate General of

Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) of the Ministry of Culture cooperate and encourage these patriotic efforts and works with INTERPOL among others to retrieve stolen treasures. So far the local initiatives have not received much central government cash given the many current urgent societal needs. And a paucity of foreign material assistance is arriving. But the dearth of the latter is partially offset by the expanding international interest and concern for what has been happening to archeological sites in Syria and what needs to be done urgently by way of protection and restoration.

The author has visited a number of very impressive repair and reconstruction projects now being worked on at archeological sites around Syria. Local community achievements here in Syria bring to mind the resurrection of the Phoenix with hope for salvaging and restoring our shared global heritage. Examples include return visits in mid—February, 2015 to archeological sites first toured nine months earlier, shortly after armed gangs and looters were expelled and the sites were returned to the local community's protection.

### ***Saint Mary Church of the Holy Belt (Um al-Zennar, Homs)***

In the Old City of Homs, the Syriac Orthodox Church, Saint Mary Church of the Holy Belt (Um al-Zennar) still bears some char marks from burning by retreating insurgents. Like eleven other churches in Homs, St. Mary's was looted of objects and vandalized, with the insurgents leaving sectarian graffiti on the walls. The majority of churches and Archbishoprics of other confessions are also concentrated in the nearby neighborhoods of Hamidiya, Boustan and al Diwan.





Examining the“ Bible burn pit ”in the courtyard of  
St. Mary's on 5/11/2014

Before the current crisis there were an estimated 100,000 Christians living in the Old City. Most fled in February 2012 and as of May, 2014 approximately 100 remained. One neighbor of St .Mary's informed this observer during his visit two days after rebels vacated the area on May 9, 2014 that all“ Symbols related to Christianity were removed. Even from inside houses. If you had a picture of the Virgin Mary, they removed it ”.In neighborhoods near the old city, churches were damaged to varying degrees. The Greek Orthodox Church of Saint George was completely destroyed. Others, including the Greek Catholic Church of Our Lady of Peace, the Church of the Holy Spirit, and the Protestant church, were severely damaged.



The author examining the nave of St. Mary's Church shown on 5/11/2014, two days after nearly all of its contents were destroyed by fire or looted by retracting armed gangs which earlier numbered up to 2000 gunmen.

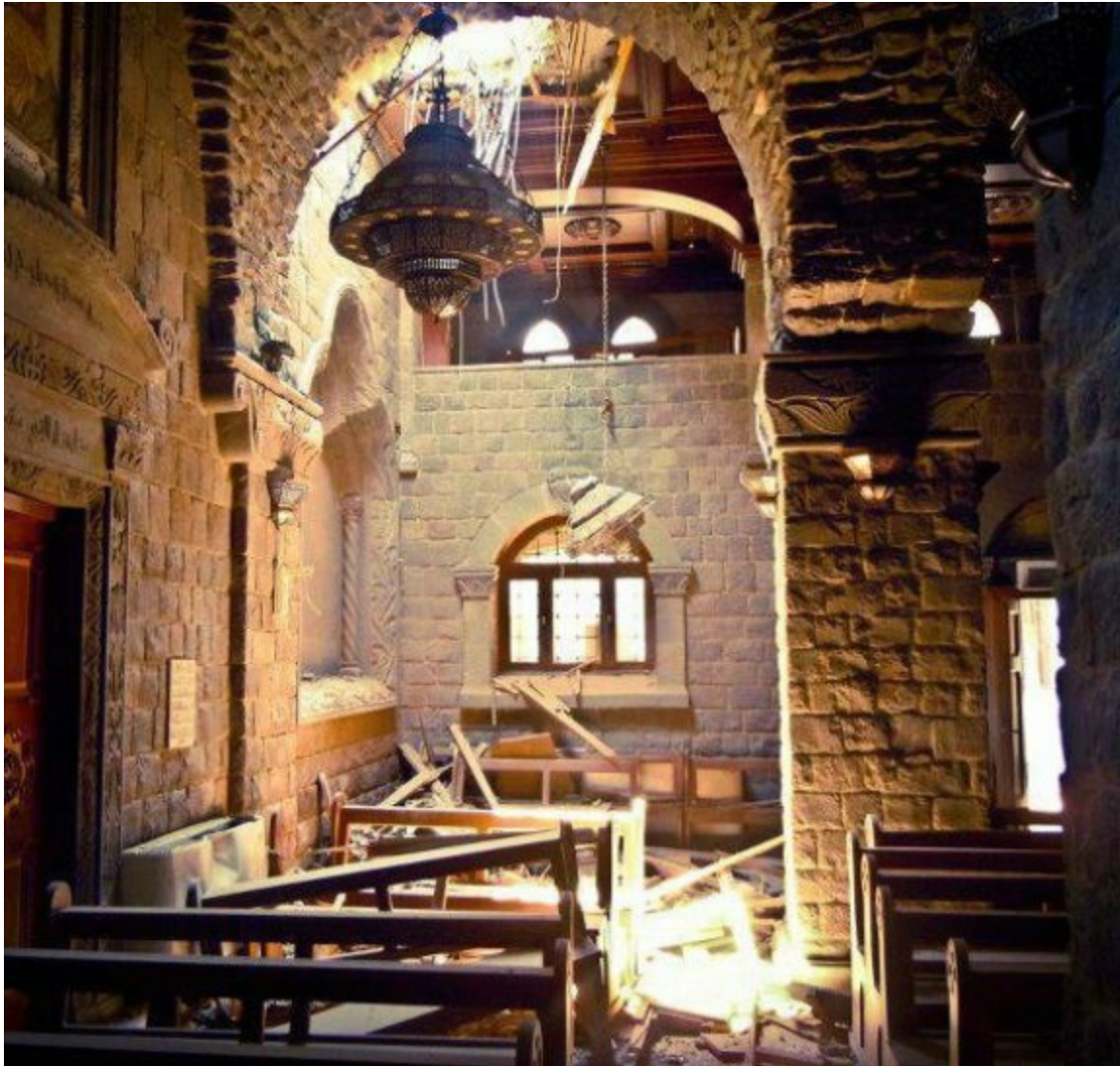
St Mary's is built over an underground church dating back to the mid first century and tradition has it that this seat of the Syriac Orthodox archbishopric contains a venerated relic which the local Bishop explained as he shoved rubble from around the altar. That relic is claimed to be a section of the waist belt of Mary, mother of Jesus. This observer was inspired by the number of parishioners and others from the neighborhood, including many Muslims one church official told me, as I watched several from the community who were covered in dust and soot cleaning out the war rubble. Syrians, almost without exception from my experience, are deeply connected with their cultural heritage and do not distinguish all that much among its origins. Rather it appears that they are proud to help others protect and rebuild their damaged religious and cultural sites and focus more on the task of restoration of their heritage than fixing blame.

The author surveyed the damage to the compound with church clergy and examined the still smoldering ' bible pit ' where just before their departure two days earlier, armed groups built a fire of Bibles, church documents, religious icons, art works and sacramental liturgical vestments worn by Priests during Holy Communion and the performance of their religious duties. Shifting through the ashes one found the remains of stoles, manipules, dhasubles, daimatics, surplices, and choir cassocks as well as several burned crosses

The day after this observer first visited the old city of Homs in May of 2014, Um Al-Zenar Church held its first Holy Communion since the conflict began and is now offering returning parishioners Communion every Sunday. As shown in the 2/9/2015 photo below, volunteers from St Mary's and the surrounding neighborhood have recently created a garden on top of the jihadist's burn—pit.

Many displaced people returning to their local community, still numbering fewer than ten percent of the pre—conflict population of the Old City of Homs, volunteer at St. Mary's and elsewhere for many reasons ranging one imagines from a sense of Resistance to those who desecrate theological sites to ways to achieve a closure of sorts. As one parishioner explained to the author, "Helping repair war damage makes us feel that we are not helpless despite

what we continue to suffer and that we can be part of rebuilding our country”.



Destruction at Um al-Zannar Church, Old Homs

St. Mary's nave and sanctuary has been cleansed of the thick soot and the heavy smell of burned furnishings and timbers. As the photo below shows, in many cases locals have literally retrieved pieces of priceless art from the detritus and pieced them together.



The author in St. Mary's courtyard )Photo: Alistair Lamb(



St. Mary's courtyard after cleaning and restoration )Photo: Alastair Lamb, 2/9/2015(

### ***Krak des Chevaliers, Homs***

Less than an hour's drive to the west toward Lebanon, a trip facilitated at half a dozen checkpoints once ID was verified, and the frequently raise eyebrows and question“ ,What's an American doing around here ”?this observer returned after nine months to the 11th century crusader castle and later Muslim fortress, Krak des Chevaliers. Along with T. E. Lawrence, whose judgment I share this hilltop redoubt is the most majestic in the Middle East.





Krak des Chevaliers (Husn Citadel)

The medieval fortress was seized by armed groups in 2012 and again in 2013, but retaken by government forces on March 20, 2014. Damage, though not as severe as at St. Mary's church or nearby Khalid ibn al-Walid Mosque was substantial in some parts of the massive castle.



Damage occurring in the main courtyard of Krak des Chevaliers

During my earlier May 2014 visit I saw the destruction of the staircase and

halls in front of the internal building of the fort, partial damage in the façade of the Hall of the Knights, including some damage to the decorations and arches inside the Hall. There is also damage to the façade of the King's Daughter's Tower and partial destruction of the wall between the tower and the roof of the church as well as to several places on the massive exterior and courtyard walls where explosives has caused moderate to severe damage .



(Photos: Alistair Lamb 2/9/2015) Under the supervision of The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) remarkable progress has been made in repairing and where necessary, reconstructing parts of the castle.

Staff from The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), craftsmen and local volunteers have been working at Krak since May of 2014 and are making remarkable progress in repairing and where necessary, reconstructing parts of the castle. Their work continues today and local leaders mention plans for resuming its world famous annual festival including the preeminent regional handicrafts exhibition. Seeing the repairs underway at the fortress is a testament to the local community whose lives have been shaped by this incomparable world heritage site.

Sometimes working in the rain and fog, citizens at Krak des Chevaliers salvage damaged stonework from rubble in preparation for craftsmen placing the pieces as they were prior to the conflict. Occasionally large stone pieces need to be replaced from local stone.

### ***Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque, Homs***

The mosque is dedicated to the venerable Khalid ibn al-Walid, companion of the Prophet Muhammad, founder of Islam and a military commander who led the Muslim conquest of Syria in the 7th century following the decisive Battle of Yarmouk which put an end to Byzantine rule in Syria. The current

interior shrine that contains Khalid's tomb dates to the 11th century, and is considered to be a significant pilgrimage center. The mosque, which has been claimed was turned by the rebels into an arms and ammunition depot, was abandoned by the rebels on 27 July 2013. Heavy damage was done to the inside the mosque, including some parts of it being burned, and the door to the tomb of Khalid Ibn Al-Walid destroyed.



Destruction occurring in Khalid ibn al-Walid Mosque ,Homs





Damage to the interior of the Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque in Homs

### ***Is the Phoenix Rising From the Ashes in Syria?***

Other historical sites that as of March 2015 are being worked on largely by local residents include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Homs Museum, Homs** :Cleaning of exterior walls and removal of mortar debris, replacing damaged windows and entrances
- **Mufid al Amin House, Homs** :Securing the premises, surveying damage and organizing the required repairs with local officials and the community
- **Zahrawi Palace, Homs** :Preparing the needed restoration projects and securing the premises, surveying damage and organizing the required repairs with local officials and the community
- **Aleppo Museum, Aleppo** :Protecting the museum's inventory and warehouse, internal wooden and stone sculptures in the museum's garden and entrance area. Large sculptures secured with sand bags and wooden encasements. Securing the museum warehouse, wooden structures and, statues in the museum's garden. Replacement of the damaged windows caused by mortars striking the premises and



museum front gardens

- **Deir ezZour Museum, Deir ezZour** :Survey of structural weaknesses and reinforcing or replacing where necessary doors and windows.
- **Hama Museum, Hama** :Museum contents have been secured on and off site. Protecting the Mosaics and replacing damaged windows.
- **Taybet al Imam Museum, Hama** :The museum contents have been secured. Protecting Mosaics from vandalism.
- **Idlib Museum, Idlib** :Contents have been secured in protected museum warehouses. Replacement of damaged windows.
- **Shaqa Tower, Sweida** :Restoration and repair work to the tower. Secured the premises.
- **Shahba pool walls, Sweida** :Secured the premises and made temporary repairs and restoration to the structure.
- **National Museum, Damascus** :The museums contents and grounds have been secured and are patrolled. Protective roof insulation installed. Alarm system expanded.
- **Al Azem Palace, Old city of Damascus** :Repair and restoration of the damaged limestone façade, installation of protective roof insulation ,enhanced museum security.
- **Damascene Heritage House, Damascus** :Restoration work and installation of roof protection and insulation.
- **Khan Asaad Pasha, Damascus** :Enhanced security for the complex including rehabilitation of the premises and the installation of security measures. Rehabilitation work as required.
- **National Museum of Science and Medicine, Damascus** :Security measures taken including, but not limited to the installation of exhibit protection devices and increased guarding of the premises.

In nearly every community across Syria that is not under the control of armed militia, there are several reports of local community defense of archeological sites initiatives. In Khan Attana an historic building was robbed by armed men more than once and as a result citizens got involved and secured and guarded the building deploying rotating guard teams during the night. In the village of An Nabek on strategic Highway 5 leading from Damascus to northern Syria, which was returned to government control on 12/9/13, this observer was shown the building which armed gangs attempted

to occupy and turn it into the headquarters of a claimed Sharia court. But the local community blocked them from entering the premises and built a guarded wall around the building entrance. In Brhlia village in the countryside of Damascus, the local community worked with DGAM to retrieve one of Syria's most important mosaics and brought its hundreds if not thousands of its tesserae (small mosaic chips) to the Damascus citadel for restoration by craftsmen and students of Mosaic repair. Citizens in the same area have also recently recovered from thieves approximately 95 pieces of pottery and glass dating back to the second and third centuries AD.

What local communities are doing today in Syria to protect and preserve our shared cultural heritage is not going to solve their and our archeological crisis. But rarely, one imagines in the midst of war have citizens undertaken such Phoenix like preservation and restoration work for the benefit of mankind .



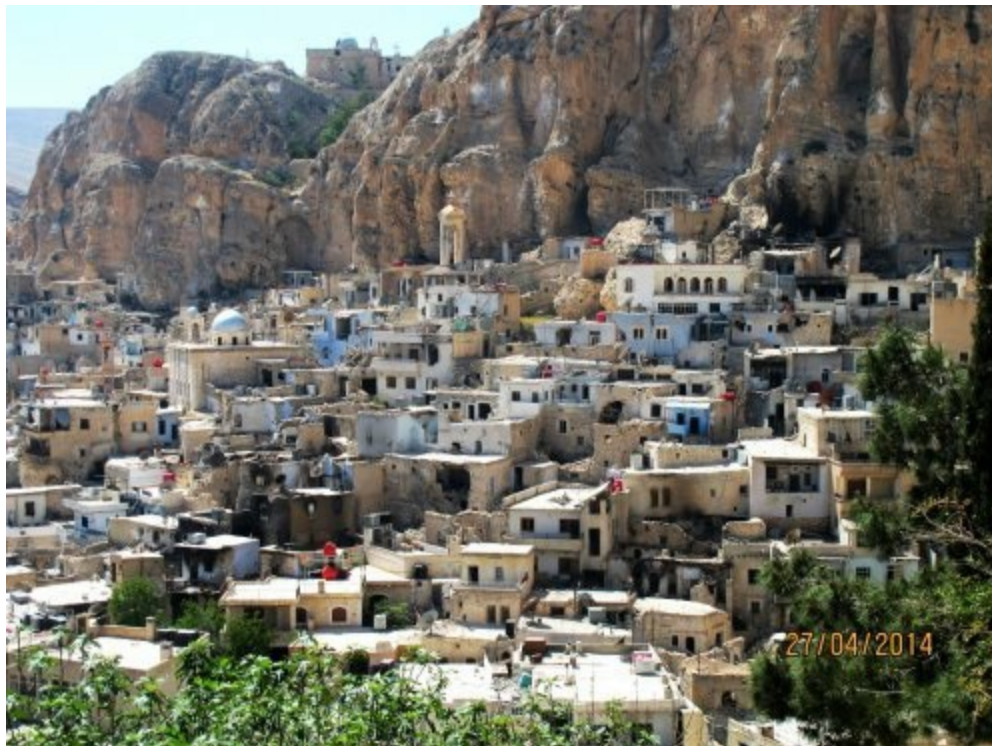
Al-Dalati /Al-Dalaty Mosque in Hammediya / Hamidia, Homs, shared by Protect Syrian Archaeology (February 17 2015)

## Damascus and countryside

Apart from a burglary at the accommodations of the national mission working at the Tell Sakka site ,no serious damages have been reported.

### ***Maaloula***

Located 56 km northeast of Damascus with a mostly Christian population, Maaloula is one of the few places in the world where Aramaic, the native tongue of Jesus Christ, is still spoken. And with monasteries and sacred monuments dating, in some cases, back to the fifth century, the town probably qualifies as one of the more unique cultural heritage sites in all of Syria.



General view of historical village of Maaloula

While the Syrian conflict began in March 2011, it didn't reach Maaloula until September of 2013 .For two and a half years the town's residents (some 3,200 Christians and approximately 600 Sunni Muslims) managed to withstand the centrifugal pressures of a vicious sectarian conflict that was engulfing the rest of the country. But that ended on September 4, when militants from al-Nusra and other armed groups entered the area, capturing a Syrian Army checkpoint after blowing up a suicide truck bomb. Fierce

fighting ensued during September, with control of the hamlet gravitating back and forth between government forces and terrorist groups, and with some of the town's Muslim residents supporting the armed rebels. In December, jihadists kidnapped 13 nuns and three maids, transporting them to the nearby town of Yabroud, where they were held until March 2014, when their release was negotiated.



Maaloula-Mar Thecla Monastery, Church of John the Baptist-  
view of the effects of the fire from the inside

Government control was restored finally on April 14, 2014 following a combined offensive by the Syrian Army and Hezbollah, but by this time many of the Christian residents had fled, and the community was left deeply scarred, with widespread destruction and desecration to its religious sites carried out by terrorist groups.





Excavations of graves of Saints from inside the Monastery of St. Sergius and Bacchus and exhumed bones from coffins

Prior to the conflict, the churches and monasteries of Maaloula had attracted both Christian and Muslim pilgrims. The monastery of Mar Thecla in fact has a reputation among believers for miraculous cures. Upon visiting the town in September 2014, this observer and his companion were given drops of holy water to splash in our eyes for good health and happiness. One can also drink water from the crack in the massive rock cliff that St. Thecla was said to have parted while fleeing the wrath of her family for turning from paganism to Christianity. Some religious scholars claim, and indeed a legend in the early church has it, that Thecla was a chaste and devoted follower of St. Paul. In any event, townspeople claim the water, which flows from the huge split rock, offers a cure for a variety of ailments.



Charred icons from the Monastery of Mar Thecla

But it will take more than water to rectify what ails Maaloula now. Damage includes, but is by no means limited to the following:

- Many of the old town houses and alleys have been destroyed. Roofs and walls of houses built of stone, in some cases three stories high, have collapsed;

- A large number of caves and archaeological cemeteries have been vandalized ,sabotaged ,and drilled, their doors smashed and turned into fortified barricades. One of the most damaged caves was on the site of Mar Sarkis, or the Monastery of St. Sergius and Bacchus;

- The Monastery of St. Thecla, including the saint's tomb, has been

completely burned, and its holy relics and icons looted, some of them already beginning to surface for illicit sale as of October 2014.

Al-Nusra terrorists are being identified as some of the most active dealers of black market antiquities of the Middle East. Lebanese media have reported that a great number of ancient icons, crosses, reliquaries and statues have been smuggled from Syria into Lebanon and then sent abroad. Local smugglers are said by INTERPOL to be moving hundreds of Maaloula's artifacts, transporting them to European countries, with the main destinations being Turkey and Italy.

As conditions worsened most of the Christians fled to Damascus, where one lady explained to this observer how al-Nusra militants occupying Maaloula had handed out "certificates of death", threatening to harm women and children should the men fail to comply with whatever orders were given them; she recalled how Christians were told to pay tributes in order to stay alive.

Besides the depredations listed above, the main entrance to St. Thecla's Monastery and its main corridor have also been badly damaged and burnt. A fire was set in the Church of St. John the Baptist, located inside the monastery, and its contents—those which were not stolen—were smashed, including the altar, the crosses, icons and frescos. Extremist phrases were written on the walls of the church, and many of the wall icons were painted over (in the ideology of some extremist groups it is forbidden to look upon the icons).



Burial caves looted at the Monastery of Saint Sergius(4/24/2014)

At the nearby Monastery of St. Sergius and Bacchus—constructed in the fifth century and one of the oldest monasteries in Syria—parts of the western and eastern walls were substantially damaged by mortar shells. Additionally, the massive dome of the building has been destroyed ,apparently hit by shells from different directions, and the bell removed. On the inside, the main marble altar lies destroyed, its wooden cross smashed. Drilling operations were carried out underneath the altar, apparently in search of treasure. All of the movable antiquities and holy items inside the monastery have been stolen, including the most important Maaloula icons.

Moving on to the nearby Church of St. Leontius—here the southern wall, the roof, and the dome of the building have been damaged from shelling. Inside the shrine, the marble tabernacle is destroyed and holy items have been stolen, including the ancient church bell, which is claimed by locals to have been one of the most beautiful—sounding church bells in the world, second only perhaps to the bell at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The crosses have been removed from above the domes of the church, and some of the valuable icons have been stolen ,while others were burned.



Wooden pews were piled high in the nave and set ablaze, an act of destruction which caused not only the incineration of the pews but which also set alight the wooden ceiling of the church.

No less tragic were the fates of two other world-famous monuments of Maaloula. Extremists blew up the statue of Christ the Savior, which had adorned the entrance of the St. Thecla Monastery, as well as the statue of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, a large and very iconic landmark which had stood on a cliff near the Safir Hotel—the same domicile that was commandeered and ended up serving as al-Nusra's main shelter for many months.

The Church of St. Cosmas and Damian was also destroyed, its altar and wooden iconostasis smashed and its valuable icons stolen. Elsewhere in the hamlet, the Church of St. Barbara was extensively damaged, with whatever valuables not carted off being burned. Even the more modern churches and shrines in the town have been completely looted and destroyed, including the shrines of Mar Saba and St. Thomas and the Church of St. Sherbin.

The crisis has left the town heavily pockmarked and traumatized (only about 10 percent of its residents still remain), yet the September day I visited also happened to be a religious holiday—a factor which occasioned a brief return visit by a group of nuns along with some orphaned children. For a while there was much joy, even among the ruins, and a bishop explained to me that solace and hope are still extended to the small remnant population. As the voices of St. Thecla's parishioners flowed for the duration of the visit, filling the winding paths and alleys with praises to God and humanity, it seemed almost that even the hundreds of opened and vandalized burial caves on the mountainsides were touched, momentarily, by a sense of majesty and solemnity. And then the sisters and orphans were gone, returning to their hopefully safe quarters in Homs. It is hoped that those quarters will be only temporary, for Maaloula sorely needs these residents to return to erase the ghost—town feeling that exists here.

Maaloula and its citizens urgently need governmental and international solidarity and assistance so as to begin the daunting task of resurrecting this formerly peaceful place of spirituality. A town motto that used to be cherished by the residents (but is no more) reads “:Everyone is a Christian and everyone is Muslim ”. And indeed, for more than 14 centuries Christians and Muslims shared this hamlet as good neighbors .

It was late and time to return to Damascus. A warning came from nearby

soldiers stationed not far from a Hezbollah camp to be careful using the roads after dark. At this same moment, the five—year—old daughter of one of the townsmen who had toured the ruins and church buildings with us, looked up at her father with love and pride—this as the embittered gentleman, who had fought the al-Nusra invaders, shook hands and gazed into my eyes. And for a moment, both of our eyes filled with tears.

“No ”,he said—“ ,no, we ask others to forgive our trespasses, and we must forgive those who trespassed against us. Christ Jesus taught us this. And we must turn the other cheek ”.

His is a minority view in the town, the author was told, but with those words from the Lord’s Prayer, I watched as the noble man wiped his eyes, and then he squeezed his young daughter’s hand. The five—year old looked up at her baba and appeared to understand him, this as he gazed high up into the surrounding mountains, and directly at the mountain top remains of the Safir Hotel where al-Nusra had had its headquarters and from which it had rained mortars and rockets down on the defenseless village.

In the library of the Mar Sarkis monastery, just before leaving, I found a visitor’s book where visitors can write comments. One comment, signed by a lady from Boise, Idaho and still legible ,reads :

*“This is a very beautiful place to visit and also very inspirational to know that Christians have existed in this area continuously for so many years. May the work here in God’s name continue and help to bring peace and understanding to all people in the Middle East and the world ,regardless of who or by what means they choose to worship God”.*

## **Daraa**

Dating back to the time of the ancient Canaanites, the city of Daraa is located in the southwest corner of Syria, about 90 km south of Damascus, near the border with Jordan. It is the capital of Daraa Governorate and comprises part of the Hauran region (from the Aramic *Hawran* ,meaning “cave land ,”(an area that also includes Mount Hermon to the north and the Golan Heights on the west. The city is mentioned in Egyptian hieroglyphic tablets dating back to the fifteenth century BC and the time of Pharaoh Thutmose III, and later it became part of the Seleucid Empire following the reign of Alexander the Great.



Damage to the King's Daughter's Bed,  
Ancient City of Bosra

Daraa was one of the early flashpoints in the Syrian conflict, and since March of ,2011 illegal digs have become increasingly common, with armed gangs and antiquities smugglers carrying out depredations around Wadi Yarmuk and Tell Ashaari. There have even been digs inside of the city's al-Omari Mosque, where tiles in the flooring have been destroyed. The mosque has also sustained extensive damage from artillery shells both to its minaret as well as to its *sahn* ,or courtyard. Additionally in Daraa and the surrounding area:

- The cultural site of Lajat, an open—air museum for Safaitic inscriptions, was seriously damaged;
- In Izraa, the Hraak Mosque suffered severe damage to its western and northern walls and part of its roof.
- The minarets of both the old mosque in the city of Sheikh Meskeen and the mosque in the town of Mahajja have been damaged.
- The Mabrak al-Naqua building and Nymph Temple (known locally as the“ King's Daughter's Bed (”in Bosra have been severely damaged in military clashes. The last remaining lintel above the columns of the temple have been destroyed ,as have a number of

historic houses in Bosra as well.

Additionally the second century Zain al-Abdeen Palace, in the town of Inkhil, in Daraa Governorate, was hit by mortars and also sustained damage due to looting and vandalism .The most severe damage was to the stone façade, although ancient stones were stolen while vandals also targeted the eastern part of the palace.

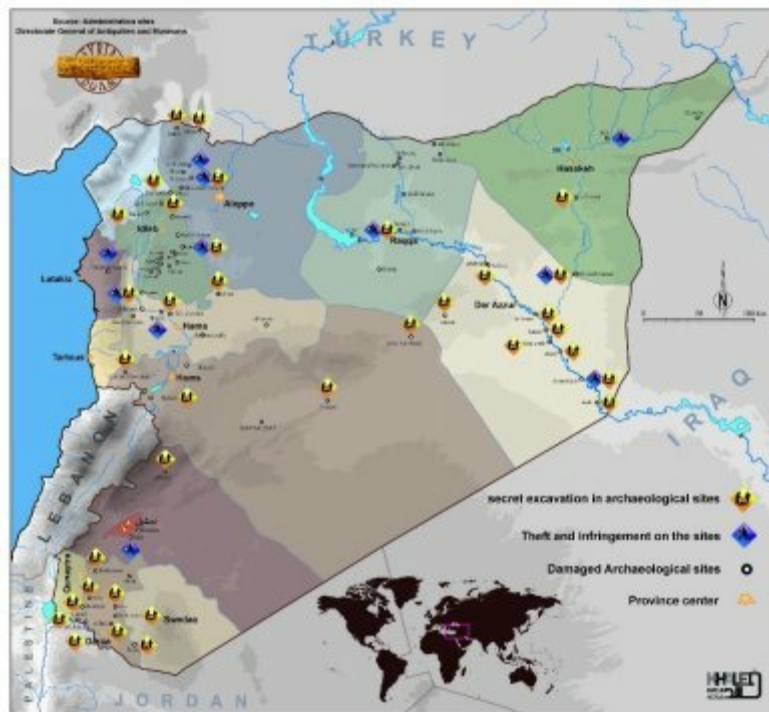
The ravages and depredations run the gamut from mild to severe to total. For a more detailed listing of damages to Syrian cultural sites, see the chart in the appendix.



Damage occurring in al-Hirak Mosque in Daraa

Yet there is also good news to report. In the city of Al-Raqqa, which endured the painful events described above, the Jaabar Castle is safe, though the castle is presently closed due to the presence of gunmen in surrounding villages. Also, the Directorate of Antiquities in the governorate of Hasakah reports that archaeological sites in the north of that province, as of May 2014, are in good condition, with no known illegal excavations having taken place. Some especially important sites in Hasakah ,where Syrian and foreign missions have collaborated on archeological digs for years, remain safe for now. This includes Tell Mozan ,Tell Leilan ,Tell

Beydar, and Tell Arbeed, where the remains of some of the most significant ancient kingdoms in the region can be found. Available evidence over the past 18 months suggests that the absence of serious vandalism at these important sites is the result of the cooperation of the locals and popular protection units in the area. At the same time, information about the status of archaeological sites in the south of the governorate remains sketchy due to difficulties faced by archaeologists and guards in accessing them.



Preliminary assessment of damage affecting archaeological sites during the crisis

# **Chapter 2**

## **National and International Legal Protections for Syria's Cultural Heritage**

*The High Contracting Parties undertake to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property. They shall refrain from any act directed by way of reprisals against cultural property.*

*- 1954Hague Convention*

For more than four years, cultural property in Syria has been targeted, damaged and destroyed without effective legal protection, while international trade in stolen cultural property continues to flourish. States have been unwilling to buckle down and control this illicit trafficking, largely due to insufficient political will, and regrettably pressure from their own citizenry—to implement available legal norms—has been missing as well.

For the most part, national laws regulating antiquities have developed over the past century (while some nations enacted laws before 1900, they were generally unable to enforce them). In 1932, Greece declared all cultural property and maritime finds to be the property of the state, requiring a registration process for collectors and dealers, and allowing only the sale of multiple artifacts by those so registered. Italy, similarly, claimed state control, in 1939, over all cultural property more than 50 years old. Turkey's initiative came to the fore in 1983 with legislation requiring dealer registration and affirming state jurisdiction over all manmade or natural items of cultural, geographic and other value. However, today Turkey is the main receiver and transit route for stolen Syrian antiquities, and its government has been repeatedly accused of facilitating the looting of artifacts and of being involved in the black market trade of them. Switzerland has no serious antiquities controls—the main reason it has become a hub for international smuggling, while New York, London and Munich have also become similar hubs.

In the United States, debate over antiquities regulation has raged for forty years, but relatively little progress has been seen in that time. The protagonists may have changed—art museums rather than dealers are today the main opponents of regulation—but the opposing camps still hold highly divergent views, even with respect to the most fundamental questions: do antiquities belong to source countries or to humankind? Are unprovenanced objects likely to have been looted? Is archaeological heritage best protected through strict regulation or through the release of objects to the open market?

The archaeological and art communities give very different answers to these questions, and the parameters of the debate have changed little in four



decades. According to the State Department's Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC), designated archaeological and ethnological materials require an export license from their country of origin to be imported to the United States or proof that the object left the country of origin before the effective date of the bilateral agreement, and the U.S. has entered into bilateral agreements with other countries that specify the designated materials. The CPAC reviews proposed bilateral and emergency agreements and reports to the president, and while the US, under provisions of the Cultural Property Implementation Act, has negotiated a number of bilateral agreements with other countries, it has taken a long time for Congress to approve them. One reason for this, and probably the main one, is that certain powerful lobbies, including art collectors and museums, are not happy with the approach taken ,arguing that it is overbroad in its scope.



The Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums Logo

### ***An overview of key provisions in Syrian antiquities laws***

Today a number of factors figure prominently in the continuing assaults on Syria's cultural heritage, factors warranting renewed and urgent international attention. One is that a global black market in antiquities, including cultural items exported in violation of the domestic laws of states of origin, has expanded into a major commercial industry, with sales reaching into the billions of dollars. These antiquities are excavated and transported in clear violation of Syrian law, then sold in places like Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany, often ending up in museums or private collections. Syria and other origin states have a legitimate claim that their cultural heritage is being stolen, and member states of the United Nations have an obligation to help stop it. That fact that irreplaceable antiquities are being removed from their historic archaeological context, and then inadequately stored or protected, resulting in a permanent loss to scholarship, is a constant worry of Syrian and international archaeologists. Exacerbating concerns further is that many of Syria's antiquities have been, and continue to be, destroyed in the ongoing hostilities by terrorist groups. Some rebel groups have boasted about their commitments to attacking global archaeological property, while others have promised not to attack such sites—but regardless, all have had a hand in destroying antiquities. Some captiously plead innocent to cultural heritage destruction (for such is indeed quite illegal under international law) on the grounds that military assets are located near archaeological sites. It was back in the late nineteenth century that the first lists of historic buildings and sites were drawn up and attached to an Ottoman antiquities law. Throughout the French mandate period in Syria, (1946- 1920) an extensive list of individual buildings was added to a catalogue of urban monuments and archaeological sites. In the post—independence era, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) has continued preparing such lists incrementally, with a listing of historic areas and zones beginning in earnest in the late 1970s, including the designation of large urban tracts as historic zones.

DGAM is the main governmental agency involved in the preservation of Syria's heritage. A key directorate within the Ministry of Culture, DGAM approves and supervises restoration projects, and is even authorized to set

and implement national policy within the context of the country's antiquities laws. It also guards listed sites, mainly through its local branches, prepares security decrees, and supervises the issuing of permits for government—financed restoration projects. Generally all essential decision making is done at DGAM headquarters, where most of the agency's antiquities experts are based.

Once a building or a zone is listed, the cadastral records for the plots affected are modified to include a legal juncture of historic protection. Local authorities consult these records prior to planning work or issuing building permits. The legal juncture requires the approval of the local DGAM branch before any public or private work is allowed. DGAM also organizes inspection criteria to verify adherence to the regulations, and the listing of a building or site automatically results in a protective buffer zone where any construction work requires DGAM approval.

The antiquities laws in Syria provide fairly severe punishment for violators found abusing, defacing or demolishing listed antiquities. Both fines and jail terms are handed down for infractions. The local DGAM branches have several tools at their disposal to insure the protection of listed buildings. These include cooperation with local municipal authorities, including police, to initiate charges against violators, as well as the provision of in-house guards for important sites. Under current law, materials are divided into two main categories: movable and immovable. The immovable category for the most part applies to built heritage, and can include individual monuments or old neighborhoods. The classification may be based upon technical and artistic qualities or the site's link to important historic events, but it is also possible to apply conservation laws to wider areas by stretching the definition of historical neighborhoods as provided for under a 1963 law.

Along with demarcating historical zones, the law allows for the elaboration of special protection codes and supervisory bodies to oversee and preserve these areas—thus each of the registered historic zones is put under the supervision of an ad-hoc committee known as The Protection Committee. These committees were mostly formed through prime ministerial decrees, emphasizing an executive approach towards administering the sites. Each includes representatives from the main public authorities concerned (Antiquities, Tourism, Culture, Municipality, and Religious Endowments) as well as some other public or private stakeholders.

Another important institution concerned with antiquities is the Ministry of

Awqaf) religious endowments .(Awqaf is the Islamic system providing sustainable financing of religious activities and social charities. Throughout history, pious Muslims donated their properties for this cause, and revenues from endowments were used to support charitable activities and to preserve and maintain the endowments. In 1949, the Syrian government cancelled individual endowments, grouping them together under the authority of the Ministry of Awqaf. The ministry at that time became the single largest landholder in the country. Funds were collected centrally and redistributed for charitable and religious activities as well as rehabilitating and developing the Awqaf real estate stock. It is in historical, urban zones that the ministry is particularly strong, providing a substantial rehabilitation budget for its properties. Funds are mostly directed to the preservation of religious monuments as opposed to rehabilitating private historic homes.

The Ministry of Tourism also has recently come into the picture as a strong protagonist in the development of historic zones into tourist destinations. Functioning as both a promoter as well as regulator of tourism, the ministry has recently begun to highlight the potential of vernacular architecture as a means of attracting tourism, and its role in identifying such sites is becoming increasingly more pivotal. At the same time, its direct investment into this realm is limited, and at present it plays more the role of facilitator than direct financial provider.

In Syria, municipal councils, too ,hold a wide range of jurisdictions under the Local Administration Law of 1971. Within their jurisdictions they exert an executive role, and DGAM delegates often request their assistance for a variety of tasks related to antiquities and the assertion of protective buffers around protected zones and sites.

## Pending changes to Syria's antiquities law

The legal affairs department of DGAM has drafted a new law on the protection of Syrian archaeological heritage within the context of the international conventions. Currently pending in Parliament, the law, if enacted, is expected to intensify the protection, management and rehabilitation of Syria's global heritage. While the draft legislation has not yet been made public, government sources say it would provide a higher level of legal protection for the sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, and also facilitate the active participation of local communities in protecting, managing and repairing heritage sites. Additional draft legislation reportedly would also establish a public "watchdog" type commission with enhanced powers to oversee the protection and management of Syria's heritage.



Draft Law on the Protection, Management and Promotion of the Syrian Archaeological Heritage/the Legal Department of the DGAM

## ***Sources of international law applicable to Syria's cultural heritage***

This author submits that international laws applicable to the theft and destruction of our global heritage are derived primarily from international treaties and conventions expressly recognized by the contesting states. Treaties, as 'hard law', should be viewed as having the legal status of legislation or of contracts regulating a particular subject of international relations among the countries that ratify them. Consequently, international conventions take precedence among subsidiary evidence of binding law, for these establish a general practice of specific international behavior accepted as law by the global community. One international law applicable to Syria is "the general principles of the law recognized by civilized nations «found in Article 38(1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. Article 38(1) (b) also defines" evidence of a general practice accepted as law", meaning those aspects of binding international law that derive from universally accepted practices as to become custom. Such examples offer the most highly qualified juristic writings, constituting an additional means for the determination of rules of law with direct applicability to the preservation and protection of our global cultural heritage in Syria. Virtually all of the world's governments accept the existence of customary international law and its binding nature. Along with general principles of law and treaties, customary law is considered by the International Court of Justice, jurists, the United Nations, and its member states to be among the primary sources of binding international law.

Additionally, Syrian cultural heritage property is subject to two international legal regimes, the 1970 UNESCO Convention and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention. One of these protects cultural property during wartime, while the other regulates the international trade in stolen cultural property. To date, however, neither has been notably successful. The international trade in looted cultural property flourishes because states have been unwilling to invest legal resources in controlling it, and governments have not been sufficiently pressured by their citizenry to implement available legal norms or to cooperate internationally.



## ***The 1970 UNESCO Convention***

The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was adopted in 1970 at the 16th general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and is often referred to simply as the UNESCO Convention. As of early 2014, there were 125 signatories, including Syria, and including also the United States, which today remains the largest market for stolen antiquities. The convention grants member states the right to recover stolen or illegally exported antiquities from other member countries, and also mandates observance of export restrictions of origin states. Consequently, since Syria forbids people to export ancient artifacts, parties to the convention are required to promulgate laws that punish people who import the Syrian objects. American law incorporated the UNESCO Convention in 1983 through the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act, but its enforcement has been checkered.



The 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention

The UNESCO Convention limits the recovery of stolen property to “property stolen from a museum or a religious or secular public monument or similar institutions provided that such property is documented as appertaining to the inventory of that institution”. Countries ratifying the UNESCO Convention commit to:

- a) Enacting domestic law forbidding the purchase of illegally exported cultural goods**
- b) Prohibiting the import of antiquities stolen from museums or public institutions**

**c) Seizing and returning stolen or illicitly imported cultural goods upon request by the country of origin.**

As noted above, the convention obliges states to respect the export restrictions of origin states. Thus ,since Syria forbids the exportation of ancient artifacts, parties to the convention must adopt statutes penalizing those who import Syrian objects. The general view, however, is that the UNESCO Convention has failed to halt the trading in illegally acquired antiquities—indeed, that the trade is far greater today than when the convention went into force 40 years ago.

Another drawback is that while affirming the principle of national retention, the convention fails to protect archaeological sites or to discourage looting or illegal excavation from such areas. Also, ideally, it would have included a clause articulating an obligation, or at least a concept, of a shared trust or stewardship of our common global heritage. But this too was omitted.

Nonetheless ,UNESCO plays a vital role, and one of its particularly noteworthy contributions continues to be its list of World Heritage Sites ,a listing of cultural sites regarded as significant enough to merit special international protections. As discussed in the previous chapter ,six sites in Syria are World Heritage—ranked sites: the Ancient City of Damascus, Ancient city of Bosra, site of Palmyra ,Ancient City of Aleppo ,Krak des Chevaliers and Qal’at Salah El Din, and Ancient Villages of Northern Syria. In addition, 12 other sites have been placed on the list of Tentative World Heritage Sites. These are:

- Norias of Hama
- Ebla (Tell Mardikh)
- Apamee (Afamia)
- Maaloula
- Tartus : Citadel of the Crusaders
- Dura Europos
- Island of Arwad
- Mari & Europos—Dura sites of Euphrates Valley
- Mari (Tell Hariri)
- Raqqa—Ràfiqa : the Abbasid City
- Ugarit (Tell Shamra(
- Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi

While the UNESCO Convention was enthusiastically embraced by

developing countries experiencing archaeological plunder, the majority of market countries, including Britain ,Switzerland ,Germany, and Japan —though one and all are signatories to the convention—have resisted or rejected enforcement. From the point of view of such countries, the convention harmed the interests of art dealers, museums and collectors by limiting their ability to acquire antiquities. In some cases, citizens of these countries, in light of what is happening to Syria's cultural heritage, have begun to step forward with petitions ,yet still there is intransigence on the part of authorities.



Norias of Hama

# **The 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen and Illegally Exported Cultural Objects**

The UNIDROIT Convention also deals with cultural property protection and attempts to fill gaps in the 1970 UNESCO Convention. At its core, UNIDROIT aims to reduce illegal trafficking in cultural property by obligating buyers to check the legitimacy of their purchases. If a determination is made that a piece of property was stolen or illegally exported, the treaty stipulates that it be immediately returned (Art. 3.1)

*“For the purposes of this Convention, a cultural object which has been unlawfully excavated or lawfully excavated but unlawfully retained shall be considered stolen, when consistent with the law of the State where the excavation took place «,the agreement states.*

UNIDROIT requires the return of all stolen antiquities, regardless whether they were bought in good faith or in ignorance of their provenance. It further requires the items' original owners to compensate good—faith buyers, and for this reason poor countries have had difficulty recovering their expensive antiquities. Also introduced by UNIDROIT is an innovative attitude to the problem of illegal trafficking, since for the first time the dealer is responsible for proving that a cultural object has a legitimate origin. As well, the convention raises, and answers, the question of who is to pay compensation to the claimant. When cultural property is determined to have been stolen, the final purchaser must pay compensation to the affected party unless it can be proven that he/she acted with “due diligence” (Art. 4.1) Moreover, if an illegally exported cultural object was inherited or received as a gift, the new possessor has the same responsibilities as a buyer. As a result, museums and other public institutions are required to check the origin and legitimacy of donated

objects using international and national databases, the largest and most effective of these being the INTERPOL Stolen Works of Art Database.

A U.S. delegation was actively involved in writing the UNIDROIT Convention, but intense lobbying by a number of American museums, art dealers and collectors persuaded Congress to block the U.S. from signing. One of the arguments made to Congress by antiquity dealers was that it is unfair ,for example, to force a third or fourth generational purchaser or possessor of an allegedly stolen artifact to return it ,and dealers strongly objected that the law would harm their business.

UNIDROIT is a flawed step in the right direction ,but much more effective laws, both at the national and international levels, are urgently needed. At the same time, this author submits that if ever brought fully into force, UNIDROIT would be quite effective in combatting the growing illegal traffic of Syria's cultural property.

### ***The 1954 Hague Convention***

In the wake of disastrous failures to protect cultural property during World War II, nations sent delegates to The Hague, Netherlands in 1954 for purpose of addressing this issue. Two previous Hague Conferences (in 1899 and 1907) had resulted in some of the first international agreements governing the conduct of war ,and while some attention was given to cultural property in those treaties, the looting of museums in the second world war made clear the need for additional measures—and the result was the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This convention, along with its two subsequently—adopted protocols, obligates belligerents to avoid targeting cultural property and to protect it when possible, requiring as well that states at peace should take certain measures to safeguard their own cultural property in advance of war .Also codified into the agreement is the doctrine that belligerent forces should not intentionally damage or seize either private property or state property that does not have a military purpose.

The 1954 Hague Convention provides that cultural property can be attacked only in cases of“ imperative military necessity ”,though without defining this exception. But under Protocol I, adopted in 1977 ,only military objectives —more clearly defined and more carefully selected—can be made the goal of

an attack. Additionally, cultural property may be targeted only when there is no other feasible alternative. Rules pertaining to precautions that must be exercised in the event of attack were also outlined in the protocol, but overall, the system of cultural property protection established in the original Hague framework never worked effectively, bringing about the need for a second protocol, adopted in 1999.



Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) Officer James Rorimer supervises U.S. soldiers recovering looted paintings from Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany during World War II. The provision in the 1954 Hague Convention to have trained military personnel within a nation's armed forces was inspired by the successful example of the MFAA. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

Protocol II to the 1954 Hague Convention established what was basically a new system under which cultural property of the greatest importance to humanity can be placed under enhanced protection provided it is designated as such under domestic law and not used for military purposes or to shield military sites. Enhanced protection is granted from the moment of the item's entry onto the "List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection". Determination of property placed on the list is made by the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, an intergovernmental committee established under the new protocol.

Another development reflected in Protocol II is an increased effort to fight impunity through effective prosecution of war criminals. The protocol specifically defines five serious violations for which it establishes individual criminal responsibility. The list goes well beyond existing law. States,



however, must adopt appropriate legislation to make the violations criminal offenses under domestic law and to provide appropriate penalties and establish jurisdiction. However, this can include universal jurisdiction for three of the five serious violations. Also as a matter of course, Protocol II applies equally to international and non—international armed conflicts. The application to non—international conflict, among other provisions, makes the 1954 Hague Convention fully applicable to the Syrian crisis (as discussed more fully below) ,yet in actual practice, the ameliorating effect has, once again ,been limited. In Syria, as elsewhere, illegal trade in antiquities produces a number of harms. The antiquities are frequently damaged, scholarly information is lost because archaeological norms are violated, and the origin country loses the antiquities to foreign countries, this while purchased antiquities usually disappear into private collections where they cannot be studied by scholars or appreciated by Syrians who deeply care about their cultural heritage.

Other provisions of the 1954 Convention require that: a) parties give appropriate training to their soldiers; b) impose criminal punishments on persons who violate the convention; and c) occupying powers prevent people from removing cultural property from occupied territory. But as Professor Eric Posner has written, in a critique of international laws covering the preservation of global heritage, the convention's most comprehensive provisions are 1) requirement that the parties prepare for armed conflicts by taking steps to safeguard cultural property (art. 3), and (2 ,belligerents refrain from targeting cultural property except in case of military necessity, while also protecting such property from vandalism and theft (art. 4)<sup>[1]</sup>.

As of early 2014, one hundred and twenty—six states had ratified the 1954 Convention, and the UK was expected to ratify it soon. Ninety—two states have ratified the first protocol and thirty—seven states ,most of them small or poor, have ratified the second .Regrettably, the United States has not ratified any of the instruments, but importantly it has announced that it regards the US as bound by rules of customary international law on the subject and that it also views all UN member states as identically bound.



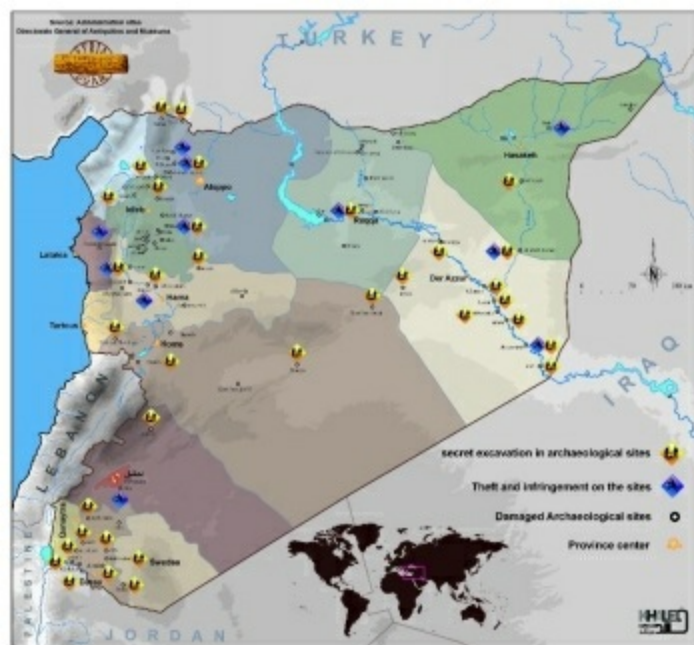
Damage inflicted on al-Sarraj archaeological bathhouse in Old Homs due to armed conflicts

### ***Is the Hague Convention's "military necessity" doctrine applicable to the Syrian crisis?***

The laws of war, or international humanitarian law, go back centuries, but their modern incarnation took form at The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907. The Fourth Hague Convention (drafted at the 1907 conference) prohibits belligerents from targeting or intentionally damaging "buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes [and] historic monuments" or seizing or intentionally damaging "institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and the sciences, historic monuments, [and] works of art and science".

These provisions were bolstered considerably with the signing of the 1954 Convention and the passage of the two subsequent protocols. The upshot was the codification of the longstanding doctrine that belligerent forces must not intentionally damage or seize real or personal property that does not have a clear military purpose. Do these international agreements apply to the Syrian conflict? Absolutely! Even under the earlier 1907, Fourth Hague Convention, taken alone, it is clear that the doctrine of "military necessity" applies and governs the treatment of Syrian cultural property. Yet with the passage of the 1954 Convention and subsequent protocols, even more detailed obligations were spelled out, including an extension of the protections to internal conflicts and the creation of a committee with responsibility for administering the treaty regime.

In spite of all this, recent experience with applications of the Hague Convention has led to a widely held view that the treaty regime has failed in its purpose. One indication of this failure is simply that cultural property continues to be destroyed in armed conflicts .And one of the more egregious examples of this is the conflict in Syria, where certain of the armed groups not only have disregarded their obligations to prevent looting, illegal excavations and wanton destruction, but have in many cases committed these crimes themselves. All of which is not to say the Hague Convention has had no effect in Syria. Only that its effect has been limited.



Preliminary assessment of damage affecting old buildings at archaeological sites during the crisis

### ***Will events in Syria mirror those in Iraq?***

The ongoing conflict in Iraq is one of several recent wars that point to the failure of the “military necessity” doctrine in the struggle to protect global cultural heritage. And we now are faced, of course, with the possibility that what happened in Iraq will be repeated in Syria. Though Protocol II of the Hague Convention, adopted in 1999, outlaws the use of heritage objects for any military purpose under any circumstance, there are signs coming from the combatants in Syria that they will opt for the “military necessity” defense should they ever be forced to appear before a Hague Tribunal. If so, it will not be the first time the justification has been used under dubious pretexts.



Warehouse of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad after looting in 2003

During the Saddam Hussein kangaroo—court proceedings his lawyers defended their client by arguing that the Baghdad Museum was situated in a strategic military position since it lay just opposite Special Republican Guard compound, which the court surely would agree is a military target. In point of fact, by the time U.S. forces entered Baghdad in April of ,2003 Iraqi troops had prepared fighting positions and military fortifications within the museum compound. The sole purpose, the court was informed, was “to protect Iraqi cultural heritage from the American led criminal invaders”.

The Iraqi government was widely accused of being in violation of the Hague Convention (to which Iraq is a party), and also of customary

international law. To escape liability ,Iraq would have had to prove that the utilization of the Baghdad Museum, which housed the largest collection of antiquities in the region outside of Egypt, was prompted by military necessity, and that it was embarked upon solely to achieve legitimate military objectives that would otherwise be unattainable by any other means. Saddam's legal team failed to convince the tribunal that tried him, or, one imagines, any serious legal observer, or the general public for that matter, that this was the case.

On the contrary, once Iraqi combatants occupied the museum, it could arguably be considered a legitimate target for opposing forces. However, the attacking troops would still be obligated, under customary international law and the Hague Conventions, not to cause disproportionate damage to the building or its environs. Therefore, any damage to the museum building or the antiquities it housed that occurred during the battle may not necessarily be a violation of international law.

But the locating of monuments, museums, and other cultural heritage sites near arguably legitimate military targets, or likewise bringing military conflict to the antiquities sites, raises international legal questions relating to balancing war exigencies with preservation of global archaeological sites that belong to all of us. The actions taken by Saddam Hussein ,in essence making use of“ cultural heritage human shields ”,are violations of the Hague Convention and customary international law, given that they are not acts of imperative military necessity. Yet the same tactic has been resorted to by extremist armed groups in Syria.

The“ military necessity ”balance can be achieved ,but today's challenge, in light of the Syrian tragedy ,is to make it mandatory. Despite the widespread destruction and theft of cultural property in World War II, there were some conscientious attempts to avoid unnecessarily destroying antiquity sites. For example, allied forces ordered to stop Axis traffic through Rome in 1943 made a concerted effort to protect religious and cultural heritage sites. Airfields located in Roman suburbs were attacked ,but equally legitimate targets were left untouched, including the enemy's military headquarters, solely because it was set up in the heart of the archaeological center of Rome. Moreover, air raids in urban and/or antiquities areas were often conducted by the most accurate bomber aircraft available, and orders were given that planes were to return with their bombs if it was determined that cultural heritage sites were jeopardized<sup>[2]</sup>.

## ***Examples of Applicable Treaties in Force and International Regulations relevant to the protection of Syria's Cultural Heritage***

### ***Brussels Declaration(1874)***

**Article 8 of the 1874 Brussels Declaration provides :**The property of municipalities that of institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure or destruction of, or willful damage to, institutions of this character, historic monuments, works of art and science should be made the subject of legal proceedings by the competent authorities.

### ***Oxford Manual Of 1880***

**Article 53 of the 1880 Oxford Manual provides :**The property of municipalities, and that of institutions devoted to religion, charity, education, art and science, cannot be seized. All destruction or willful damage to institutions of this character, historic monuments, archives, works of art, or science, is formally forbidden, save when urgently demanded by military necessity.

### ***Hague Regulations (1899)***

**Article 56 of the 1899 Hague Regulations provides :**The property of the communes, that of religious, charitable, and educational institutions, and those of arts and science, even when State property, shall be treated as private property ... .All seizure of, and destruction, or intentional damage done to such institutions, to historical monuments, works of art or science, is prohibited, and should be made the subject of ;legal proceedings.

### ***Hague Regulations (1907)***

**Article 56 of the 1907 Hague Regulations provides :**The property of municipalities, that of institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure of, destruction or willful damage done to



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### ***Post First World War 1919 Report of the Commission on Responsibility***

Based on several documents supplying evidence of outrages committed during the First World War, the 1919 Report of the Commission on Responsibility lists violations of the laws and customs of war which should be subject to criminal prosecution, including“ wanton destruction of religious, charitable, educational and historic buildings and monuments”.

### ***1943Inter—Allied Declaration against Acts of Dispossession***

**In the 1943 Inter—Allied Declaration against Acts of Dispossession, the Allied governments expressed their intention :**To do their utmost to defeat the methods of dispossession practiced by the Governments with which they are at war against the countries and peoples who have been so wantonly assaulted and despoiled. Accordingly, the governments making this Declaration and the French National Committee reserve all their rights to declare invalid any transfers of, or dealing with, property, rights and interests of any description whatsoever which are, or have been, situated in the territories which have come under the occupation or control, direct or indirect, of the Governments with which they are at war, or which belong, or have belonged, to persons (including juridical persons) resident in such territories. This warning applies whether such transfers or dealings have taken the form of open looting or plunder or of transactions apparently legal in form, even when they purport to be voluntarily effected.

### ***Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property***

**(1954)**

**Article 4(3) of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property provides :**The High Contracting Parties further undertake to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property. They shall refrain from requisitioning movable cultural property situated in the territory of another High Contracting Party.

**Article 19(1) of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property provides :**In the event of an armed conflict not of an international character occurring within the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties ,each party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the provisions of the present Convention which relate to respect for cultural property.

### ***Second Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property***

**Article 15 of the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property provides:**

.1Any person commits an offence within the meaning of this Protocol if that person intentionally and in violation of the Convention or this Protocol commits any of the following acts: (e) theft, pillage or misappropriation of, or acts of vandalism directed against cultural property protected under the Convention.

.2Each Party shall adopt such measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offences under its domestic law the offences set forth in this Article and to make such offences punishable by appropriate penalties.

### ***The 1970 UNESCO Convention***

**The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property** was adopted in 1970 at the 16th general conference of the United Nations Environmental, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) grants member states the right to recover stolen or illegally exported antiquities from other member countries, and also mandates observance of export restrictions of origin states. Consequently, since Syria forbids people to export ancient artifacts, parties to

the convention are required to promulgate laws that punish people who import the Syrian objects. American law incorporated the UNESCO Convention in 1983 through the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act, but its enforced has been checkered.

### ***The 1972 World Heritage Convention (WHC)***

The thrust behind the World Heritage Convention (WHC) was to build an “effective cooperative international framework ”to protect cultural (and natural) heritage from potential and/or specific threats, including those arising during all *armed conflict*.

While the 1954 Hague Convention is designed for the protection of cultural property in *armed conflict* the World Heritage Convention is the only treaty which focuses specifically on world cultural heritage rendering both treaties relevant and needed in the protection of *world cultural heritage* in Syria.

Under Article 6 (3) of the WHC, states must refrain from taking any deliberate measures which might damage, directly or indirectly, the world cultural heritage situated on the territory of another state party. Article 6 (3) mandates protection from (i) direct attacks; (ii) use of cultural sites that might lead to their direct harm; (iii) attacks aimed at another objective but that might harm those sites indirectly; (iv) use of the surroundings of cultural heritage sites that may cause them indirect damage.



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO - Headquarters in Paris

### ***1993ICTY Statute***

**Article 3(d) of the 1993 ICTY Statute includes**“ seizure of, destruction or willful damage done to institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, historic monuments and works of art and science ”among the violations of the laws or customs of war in respect to which the Tribunal has jurisdiction.

### ***The 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen and Illegally Exported Cultural Objects***

The UNIDROIT Convention also deals with cultural property protection and attempts to fill gaps in the 1970 UNESCO Convention. At its core, UNIDROIT aims to reduce illegal trafficking in cultural property by obligating buyers to check the legitimacy of their purchases. If a determination is made that a piece of property was stolen or illegally exported, the treaty stipulates that it be immediately returned (Art. 3.1)

For the purposes of this Convention, a cultural object which has been unlawfully excavated or lawfully excavated but unlawfully retained shall be considered stolen, when consistent with the law.

### ***The 1996 International Law Commission Draft Code of Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind(1996)***

**Pursuant to Article 20(e)(iv) of the 1996 ILC Draft Code of Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind“** ,Seizure of, destruction of or willful damage done to institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, historic monuments and works of art and sciences ”is a war crime.

### ***The 1997 Revised Lauswolt Document (UNESCO)***

**Article 1(3) of the 1997 Revised Lauswolt Document states“** :Any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, any act of vandalism directed against, any illicit transaction in, or any other breach of integrity of cultural property is prohibited”.

Article 12(1) of the 1997 Revised Lauswolt Document provides:

## ***1999 UN Secretary—General's Bulletin***

**Section 6.6 of the 1999 UN Secretary—General's Bulletin states**“ :Theft, pillage, misappropriation and any act of vandalism directed against cultural property is strictly prohibited”.

## ***The 2013 Chautauqua Blueprint***

While not yet in force, the Chautauqua Blueprint is a Draft Statute receiving widespread attention. It was prepared by a panel of former international tribunal chief prosecutors, international judges, and leading experts which aims to provide a model for a Syrian Extraordinary Tribunal to Prosecute Atrocity Crimes.

The Chautauqua Blueprint was signed on Aug. 27, 2013 at the Chautauqua Institution in Upstate New York during a meeting attended by several chief prosecutors of various international criminal tribunals international judges, and law professors closely involved in creation of similar courts for Rwanda and Yugoslavia several chief prosecutors of various international criminal tribunals—about war crimes committed during the ongoing Syrian crisis. It reflects insights gained from a series of meetings and workshops over the past two years, which brought together Syrian lawyers, jurists, and civil society leaders with international experts to discuss an approach to justice uniquely tailored to Syria.

**With respect to personal accountability for Cultural Heritage crimes, the envisaged war crimes Tribunal would have jurisdiction over crimes including:**

“Intentionally directing attacks against buildings that are dedicated to religion, education, art, science, of charitable purposes, historic monuments and archeological sites, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected provide that are not military objectives”.

This article has been criticized because it reproduces exactly the crime against cultural objects of the ICC Statutes and thus the wording is far behind the current concept of cultural property and world heritage sites. To this extent it regresses to the provisions of the 1907 IV Hague Regulations because they lump together historic monuments with hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected and grant an exception for ‘ military necessity ’.The draft statute thereby fails to distinguish or grant special

protection for places of importance to humanity over a local building only valued, for example, by a neighborhood. Nor does the Draft Statutes cover the widespread crime of looting that is ravaging Syria daily. For the same reasons that 1907 Hague IV was judged inadequate for protecting World Heritage after World War II so the 2013 Chautauqua Blueprint is inadequate to hold accountable those currently destroying our cultural heritage in Syria.

### ***2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2199***

On 2/12/2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2199 (2015), under the binding Chapter VII of the UN Charter thus giving it the force of international customary law.

With respect to Cultural Heritage in Syria, the resolution provides, inter alia:

Condemns the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria particularly by ISIL and ANF, whether such destruction is incidental or deliberate, including targeted destruction of religious sites and objects;

Notes with concern that ISIL, ANF and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida, are generating income from engaging directly or indirectly in the looting and smuggling of cultural heritage items from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites in Iraq and Syria, which is being used to support their recruitment efforts and strengthen their operational capability to organize and carry out terrorist attacks;

Reaffirms its decision in paragraph 7 of resolution 1483 (2003) and decides that all Member States shall take appropriate steps to prevent the trade in Iraqi and Syrian cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, and religious importance illegally removed from Syria since 15 March 2011, including by prohibiting cross—border trade in such items, thereby allowing for their eventual safe return to the Syrian people and calls upon the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Interpol, and other international organizations, as appropriate, to assist in the implementation of this paragraph.

### ***Military Manuals: State practice concerning attacks against***



### ***cultural property as part of the conduct of hostilities***

More than 80% of UN Member States have language in their armed forces military manuals that order the protection of cultural heritage property. Some countries are currently updating their manuals to order the protection of cultural heritage, archeological sites, and prohibit looting and any dealings in stolen artifacts in areas where their armed forces are present. Fairly typical language is found in the **1958 Military Manual of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**.

Property belonging to local, that is, provincial, county, municipal and parochial, authorities ... ,as well as the property of institutions dedicated to public worship, charity, education, science and art – such as churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques, almshouses, hospitals, schools, museums, libraries, and the like – even when state property, must be treated as private property. Troops ,sick and wounded, horses, and stores may therefore be housed in buildings of that nature, but such use is justified only by military necessity. Any seizure or destruction of, or willful damage to, the property of such institutions, or to historic monuments or works of science and art, is forbidden, as is, generally, any destruction of property which is not required by imperative military necessity.

## ***Why has International law been unable to protect Syria's cultural heritage?***

An examination of state practices as well as an analysis of the views of commentators would suggest several reasons why these treaty regimes have failed. For one thing ,agreements signed to date have perpetuated the trend of including weak and vague language. Regrettably, this obtains both with respect to the 1954 Hague Convention and to the 1970 UNESCO Convention. The language of each treaty encourages states to avoid the spirit and intent of the instruments by insisting that they are in compliance with the literal meaning of the words. One example is found in the 1954 Hague Convention ,in article 4. Here the intent was to obligate states to“ respect” cultural property, though without further elaboration. International legal advisers suggested a remedy for this ill—conceived shortfall by drafting article 7 of the 1999 Second Optional Protocol. Admittedly it's an improvement inasmuch as it requires states to“ do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are not cultural property ”.But what exactly does‘ feasible ’mean in varied contexts? Moreover, few states have ratified Protocol II, and in the absence of political pressure from their citizenry they remain generally unwilling to take on strong specific obligations.

What they may be failing to consider is that sometimes in war belligerents are motivated to intentionally destroy cultural property. This observer, who has traveled fairly widely in Syria ,has seen and been briefed on some of the destruction of heritage sites that has been witnessed there. It is wreckage that in some cases appears grounded in genocide or ethnic cleansing, with perpetrators seeking domination over a particular group by eliminating the physical record of their history. Eastern Syria ,in particular, has been the scene of such acts, with efforts at eradicating cultural heritage carried out by extremist jihadist militia. Attempts were made to include a cultural heritage component in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948), but it was felt by some states at the time that the horrifying corporeal

acts being addressed should not be compared to the destruction of physical objects, and that more states would ratify the convention if the narrower definition were adhered to. Consequently, the definition of the Crime of Genocide does not include cultural heritage antiquities .In this author's view, it should.

Another factor complicating matters is that existing treaties lack effective enforcement mechanisms .UNESCO has some enforcement power, but not much. All the second protocol does is to appoint a committee, the World Heritage Committee, which is designated with the task of administering the Hague regime. At its annual meeting in 2013, the committee launched an appeal to neighboring countries and the international community for cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural properties coming from Syria. It urged all the parties to refrain from any actions that might cause further damage to Syrian heritage sites and to fulfill their obligations under international law. It also called upon states to ratify Protocol II of the 1954 Hague Convention, and even instructed the Director General of UNESCO to create a special fund aimed at conservation of Syria's world heritage properties. Yet the calls are mostly symbolic; the bottom line is that the World Heritage Committee has no enforcement powers. Even at that, signatories to the protocol that created it have thus far been relatively few. While 126 states have acquiesced in the vague Hague Convention, only 37 states have consented to its“ strengthened ”second protocol.

A broad spectrum of rationales continues to be used by museums attempting to avoid obligations under current international conventions, and the palliatives we see reflect conflicting pressures. For example, the focus of archaeology museums is generally to end archaeological looting. Hence there is considerable support for legislation. By contrast, art museums place less emphasis on archaeological knowledge, and therefore their enthusiasm for controls can be markedly more restrained .Established art museums tend to be more supportive of regulation than younger art museums because the older institutions already possess internationally valued collections, making them less eager to acquire antiquities than the developing younger foundations. These latter are often under more intense public scrutiny and potential legal action, and consequently tend to be more strongly opposed to implementing legislation.

Another reason for the regrettable current situation is that states generally are unwilling to trust international organizations to serve their interests .At

the same time, the International Criminal Court, despite litigants from around the world queuing at the doors of its registrar, is unlikely to devote significant resources to prosecuting looters and traders, even were treaty violations to be adjudicated as international crimes, which indeed they should be. And an even more fundamental problem, in the view of this observer, is that signatories to these 'feel good' conventions by and large do not take them seriously. Should the destruction of our global heritage, now coming to pass in Syria, force more countries to respect international laws on this subject, the question still arises: will the new parties to the current treaty regimes take them any more seriously?

Governments at present simply do not have a strong interest in committing to protect, or not to harm, cultural property. The vague language, the lack of ratifications, and the absence of a strong international enforcement organization—all of these reflect a deeper problem, that governments do not want to commit themselves to expend significant resources to protect foreign cultural property, either during wartime or peacetime. This might seem surprising given that national governments have gone to the trouble of creating three treaty regimes and that their spokespeople say they care deeply about cultural property. Indeed, governments do care—about their own cultural property. But in terms of heritage property outside their national boundaries, they have other priorities, and as we all know, international cooperation is difficult even when strong and shared interests are at stake.

For these reasons, it is not surprising that international cooperation to protect Syrian cultural property remains woefully inadequate. This will not change unless and until the activist international public takes the lead in saving our shared global cultural heritage. Would a stronger international committee strengthen the treaty regime? Perhaps, but such an institution is not at the moment a realistic possibility. Yet that being said, what is happening today in Syria is galvanizing international concern, and it is to be widely hoped, indeed is anticipated among some archaeologists and other observers, that the public will act to change the status quo.

# **Chapter 3**

## **“Paradise ”Lost?**

### **A Silent Slaughter in Raqqa...a Mosque Restored in Damascus**

*The mind is its own place,  
and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven*

*-John Milton-*

Despite the international conventions presently in place (discussed extensively in the last chapter), we now have begun to hear almost uninterrupted reports of artifact lootings, illegal excavations and smuggling. These activities go on with relatively few convictions worldwide .According to Ricardo Elia, of the Archaeological Institute of America ,the scale of the looting continues to be out of control despite the best efforts of many countries to protect their sites. It is not surprising then that numerous items ending up on the market in smuggling hubs such as New York and London have no previous record of ownership.

The black market, the smuggling routes, the illicit importation of stolen artifacts—all of it is like an endlessly paddling water wheel; laws are flagrantly broken, yet prosecutions are rare .One of the reasons for this, aside from the strain on law enforcement, is the argument—mounted by antiquities dealers ,collectors, and their organizations—that stringent restrictions disrupt free enterprise while also preventing those with the greatest ability to care for antiquities from doing so. This argument has often been made in the U.S. Congress .Cultural heritage objects, so goes the rationale, have always moved around the world, to be exhibited in centers of power and wealth, and as long as they remain in these centers, they will be well cared for—and this, it is presupposed, constitutes a beneficial cultural exchange.

The question of whether we live in a civilized world or not hinges upon the degree to which nations adhere to international law. The vast body of international law presently in place has been painstakingly assembled over the past century and a half. Established orders, however, can sometimes break down. Without international law, what will remain will be an “international law of the jungle ”,so to speak ,a descent into a Stygian disorder in which peoples will be compelled to surrender their sovereignty to large powers, and lands will be subject to plunder by those with the greatest propensity for ruthlessness.

In a very real sense, it is a process that has already come to Syria’s doorstep.



Yet the Syrian people have been making heroic strides in resisting it. Successful resistance requires, among other things, a hopeful heart and steady concentration; it requires being more than a trembling leaf in a storm. In Syria, resistance to foreign—backed armed groups, including Al-Qaeda affiliates, has spread from the Army into the civilian National Defense Forces, while at the same time herculean efforts have been made by DGAM, in cooperation with ordinary Syrian citizens, to safeguard the country's cultural heritage sites. An ever—present challenge, however, is the loss of government control over key areas. One such area is the city of Al-Raqqa, located on the north bank of the Euphrates River, in the Raqqa Governorate, in northern Syria.



Syria's map showing extent of damage affecting the Syrian heritage  
In each of Syria's governorates

## **‘Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently’**

Below is a transcript of an interview conducted with Ayham al Fakhri, a DGAM employee who was working in Raqqa when armed groups began seizing control of the area. The result of the takeover has been the looting of museums and illegal excavations conducted at archaeological sites.

Since 2013, Al-Raqqa city has been under the control of one armed group in particular, ISIS, or ISIL. The acronyms refer, respectively, to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Important to note, however, is that in Arab countries ISIS is principally known by its Arabic acronym, DAASH (Dulat al-Islam fi al-Iraq wal-Sham), and this is the name I have elected to use to refer to them in this volume. The names are interchangeable, though, and all pertain to the same organization.

In Al-Raqqa, a city with a pre—crisis population of approximately 220,000, DAASH has inflicted what in essence amounts to a reign of terror upon the local populace, issuing a series of decrees that have been enforced by public executions and beheadings. According to eyewitnesses who have fled the area, including members of a Facebook group called “Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently”, life in the DAASH-controlled city includes the following:

- All shop owners must close their stores immediately upon the announcement of prayer, and go to the mosque. A decree posted by DAASH on 4/27/14 read “Any violators after the issuance of this announcement will face consequences”.
- New laws by DAASH have been posted around Raqqa, with leaflets directed especially to Raqqa’s Christian community. Christians have been forced to pay a special tax to DAASH, and are strictly forbidden to wear or exhibit crosses in any way. They also are forbidden to repair war—damaged churches or recite any prayer in the presence of Muslims, and are subject to conservative dress codes, as imposed by DAASH.



Daash members smashing some archaeological statues illegally excavated from Tell Ajajeh, south of Hasakah governorate (considered as pagan worship symbols)

Al Fakhri, a DGAM staff member in Raqqa at the time the city was first overrun, spoke with this author in spring of 2014. He had at that time just been appointed vice—director of the National Museum of Damascus ,where the interview was conducted. The weeks after the interview took place saw DAASH go on to expand into Iraq ,taking over Mosul and other key cities and declaring an Islamic State in parts of Iraq and Syria.

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**Franklin Lamb :Mr .al Fakhri, what was your job and where were you working before the armed groups took control of the Al-Raqqa Museum? When was it, and what events alerted you to the takeover? Who was the armed group and where did they come from?**

Ayham al Fakhri: Just before the armed group took control of Al-Raqqa city, I had relocated to Damascus to work on another related documentation project at the Directorate) DGAM). My job as director of our project was to document exactly what happened regarding Al-Raqqa. On March 3, 2013, the same day the rebels occupied the city, I was on the scene to retrieve some articles and books from the museum library. When I entered the museum, I was shocked to see armed men ,including some local people from Al-Raqqa city, occupying the museum, its hall and its offices, after they seized the guards <weapons.

**FL: What precautions had been taken by DGAM before the armed groups took control of the museum?**

AF :The Director of Al-Raqqa Museum had been requested by DGAM in Damascus to remove the most valuable and precious antiquity pieces—gold, tablets, and coins—and take them to the central bank of Al-Raqqa. We did this, and we also installed iron gates for the storage areas upstairs ,and hired more guards to secure them. Similar measures, I think, were taken in most other museums.

**FL: A multiple—part question, if you please—who are the militants who were at the museum and what were their attitudes? Did they appear intent on destroying“ idols ”and images, such as carvings and statues of human figures? Have you received eyewitness accounts from reliable local people who saw what was done ,and if so could you give us a couple of examples? Were you able to speak directly with any of the rebels or their leaders, and finally is the museum currently occupied?**

AF: At the beginning of the occupation, some of them were fighting under the authority and banner of“ the Syrian Free Army ”and some of them were armed civilians from Al-Raqqa city. I could recognize some faces of men who were known to previously have worked in smuggling antiquities (onto) the international market. But before long they seemed to be replaced with others. Today the Raqqa Museum is occupied by (the) Islamic extremist group called DAASH. As for their attitudes toward destroying, I am not sure about this point, but I am sure that they are stealing and selling items, in spite of their claims about saving and protecting the museum. I have received reports about this from some of the rebels who told us that some of them had stolen many artifacts.



Raqqa National Museum entrance

**FL :Does the process of looting the museum and the warehouse happen during the presence of militants? Did you see this activity yourself, and if so, when was it?**

AF: Yes they were at the museum, but I was not there at the precise time, and I did not witness them carrying out antiquities. They worked basically when no one was around, mainly at night, and we are told that they did so.

**FL: How did you know about the thefts from the warehouse or the museum, and how much of the museum's and the warehouse's contents had been smuggled out? Did you write a report at the time or at any time subsequently, and if so is the report available to us?**

AF: The director of the museum discovered this while checking the gates of the warehouse and its locks, and the member of the rebels, whom I referred to before, told us that in June of 2013 one of the armed groups, DAASH, opened the warehouse and stole eight or six boxes full of antiquities. Immediately we telephoned DGAM and told them about (the) looting, and they ordered us to make an inventory of the stolen pieces and send them a report. To date the report is not publicly available.

**FL :How did you find the stolen boxes at Tabaqa city and what did they contain? Are they now secured?**

AF :When we learned about the robbery, we immediately communicated with the same DAASH leader whom we met before, and he told us that the boxes are in Al Tabaqa city .For this he went with us to the leader in Al Tabaqa. We saw only three boxes out of eight ,and they contained pottery, tablets and glazed ceramic. As of today we still do not know anything about the other stolen boxes because they are still in Al Tabaqa, and it's under DAASH control.

**FL: Who is believed to have stolen the artifacts from the central bank and where did they hide them?**

AF: An armed group called Ahrar al-Sham stole artifacts from the central bank, and we were given information that they are hidden in one of the Idlib villages.

**FL: To date have you had an opportunity to enter the museum and review the artifact lists ?If so, how long were you allowed to stay?**

AF :After an armed group called Thwar Al-Raqqa, whose members were local people, took control of the museum, we communicated with them and

met their leader“ ,Abo Issa ”,and asked him to grant permission (for us) to enter the museum and make inventory. He agreed and guaranteed our safety, especially after we had been threatened by militia gunmen many times not to make public any information about the museum and its stolen antiquities. We worked for 16 days until we finished our inventory.



Satellite image showing the city of Raqqa and Herqla warehouses

**FL: How much of the museum contents still remain to the best of your knowledge? Can you give us an estimate of the percentage of the original collection?**

AF: I think the number of stolen artifacts is around 900 from the Raqqa Museum. There are still about 4,500 artifacts remaining inside. But at the warehouse in Herqla ,the militias stole everything, but they left one mosaic panel because it was too heavy to move.

**FL: What happened in the warehouse at the Herqla site, and what steps did you take before and after the looting?**

AF :Herqla is an archaeological site seven kilometers east of Raqqa, and it contained warehouses (belonging) to DGAM and to foreign missions .The warehouses were targets for robbery and looting by unknown gangs on several occasions, but guards and local people of the village prevented them and defended the site as best they could.

We immediately communicated with the DGAM, and they asked us to pile the doors of (the) warehouses with sandbags, take all the important and precious pieces from the warehouses, and hide them in a safe place. And the guard's house in Herqla village was the best choice.



However in mid—November in 2013, an armed group, estimated to be about 100 armed fighters from DAASH, broke in the museum and also the guard's house. They stole all the boxes except mosaic panels and took them to unknown destinations. After that happened, we closed all doors and windows with iron bars.



Destruction in Herqla warehouses after looting

**FL: Which hills and ancient buildings in Al-Raqqa Governorate have been illegally excavated and smuggled?**

AF: We could not get into the hill of Al Sabee Al Abead, but the guards told us that it was excavated by simple tools. The hill of Shaheen was massively excavated using heavy machines and earth moving equipment. The sides of (the) hill of Hammam Al Turkmen were also excavated by heavy machines. Most of (the) hill of East Dammer was excavated, while the slopes of West Dammer were not excavated. The hills of al-Mafsh, of al-Sawan and of al-Sheikh Hassan were not excavated too widely .And here I should mention that I personally visited all of these sites.

While there are many archaeological sites around Raqqa, due to their location and security problems and difficulties of traveling to them, we still have no knowledge of the extent of excavations that have been done. It appears from reports when we were last in contact with guards at the hill of Khwera and Ghanem Al Ali that as of that time they had not been excavated. This may also be the case in areas like the hill of Al Swehat and the hill of Moumbaqa. But guards at the square of the ancient mosque, al-Jamee, which is located inside Al-Raqqa city, reported that it was excavated and then filled in again. After DAASH occupied Raqqa ,they totally destroyed the Shia shrine of Wabesa bin Maabd al Asdi, which is located in the square of the



mosque.

**FL: To which country do you think most of the looted artifacts were sent? What have you heard about the methods of transport, and also what have you heard about the gangs doing the stealing and who they are working for?**

AF: Because the Syria—Turkey border in the area of Raqqa is completely open, I think that most of the stolen antiquities were sent to Turkey, using cars and trucks by gangs and armed groups. Some gangs are widely known in the area to be working for international mafia groups, and some appear to be working on their own.



The temporary archaeological warehouse before the second looting in Herqla village

**FL: Based on the latest information coming in to DGAM in late April, 2014, what is the situation with regard to the museum and the archaeological sites in Raqqa now?**

AF: Well, there is some good news partly due to publicity about what is happening, and also some resistance from the local population, who deeply value Syria's cultural heritage and want it preserved. Two weeks ago, the Raqqa Museum re—opened to the public, after the director of museum got permission from DAASH. I have learned from the museum director that all

the iron gates which we installed are still (in place), so this means that no more robbery, looting or smuggling has taken place from the Raqqa Archaeological Museum. As for the other sites, we do not know anything recent or anything more about them than what I reported to you.

**FL: Thank you Vice Director al Fakhri for your time and insights.**

## **Public Executions and Pulverized Lions**

In addition to Mr .al Fakhri, this author has also spoken with others who have been in Al-Raqqa since the city fell to the armed groups. Some of these people fled, and now are residing in Palestinian camps in Syria and Lebanon. Their accounts confirm the continued destruction of antiquities, as well as murders and executions. On May ,2014 ,1 DAASH executed seven prisoners, with one of the victims being an 11—year—old boy. Following this, some of the bodies were strung up on poles, crucifixion style .One man was tied to a pole, with his arms outstretched, and a sign in Arabic taped to his shirt“ :This man fought Muslims and detonated an IED here”.

Antiquities in the area have not fared much better. On 4/25/14 DAASH militia members used a massive German—built Hydrema excavator to smash two statues of Assyrian lions believed to date to around 727 BC. According to eyewitnesses, DAASH officials explained that the lions were of pagan origin and were an insult to Islam because they depicted living creatures, and that hence they must have been worshipped as idols. The reasoning appears similar to that employed by the Taliban, which dynamited two giant statues of the Buddah in the Bamiyan Province of Afghanistan in 2001.



Smashing two statues of Assyrian lions in Raqqa city

DAASH's practice of following executions with a public display of the

corpse (often in crucifixion poses) is reportedly growing more frequent. According to witnesses, a spokesman for the group announced that the crucifixions were intended as warnings to anyone challenging Islamic rule—such persons being regarded as enemies of Allah.

“These violent acts are part of a fundamentalist revival campaign, but these forms of ancient punishment were rarely if ever seen in the Muslim world in recent centuries”, said Abbas Barzegar, assistant professor of Islamic studies at Georgia State University, USA“. Yet they have now become a common practice of fringe Islamist groups to revive these outdated practices in an effort to bring back what they believe is authentic”.

The United Nations, the Syrian opposition and human rights groups have corroborated the scenes of horror in Raqqa—while as of mid—August, 2014, the anti—DAASH activist group ,Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, had garnered more than 18,000 followers on its Facebook page. Meanwhile, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated the obvious, which is that these mass executions are war crimes.

## **The Syrian government launches restoration projects to restore archaeological sites as security conditions permit**

The wanton destruction of the lions in Raqqa is not an isolated event; similar acts have been repeated throughout the country by other fundamentalist armed groups. Crosses and Byzantine mosaics, along with numerous Greek and Roman statues, have been destroyed, often on the grounds that they are “idols”, or that their representation of human figures violates religious beliefs. At the same time, spirited efforts are being made to take hold of the fragmented pieces and to try, wherever possible, to put them back together. To that end, DGAM has undertaken a number of ambitious restoration projects, and perhaps one of the more remarkable ones has been in the capital city of Damascus.

In November of 2013, mortar rounds fired from rebel—held areas of the East Ghouta suburb slammed into the Umayyad Mosque in the old city of Damascus, causing serious damage to one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world. Built in 715, the Umayyad is located in an area rich in historic buildings, and is considered by many Muslims to be the fourth holiest place in Islam. Located nearby are the Azem Palace and Khan As'ad Pasha, the tomb of Saladin, and the Museum of Arabic Calligraphy.



The shell slammed into the mosque on the night of November 13 and blew a one square meter section out of the mosaic panel.

Known as the Great Mosque of Damascus, the Umayyad Mosque has a complicated past. After the Arab conquest of the city in 634 the mosque was built on the site of a Christian basilica that had been dedicated to John the Baptist. John is honored as a prophet by both Christians as well as Muslims, who refer to him as Yahya. The cathedral was still in use by the local Christians in the seventh century, although a prayer room (musalla) for Muslims was constructed on the southeastern part of the building. Three minarets were also built, the tallest being named the Minaret of Jesus (Issa), while the minaret in the middle of the north side is called the Bride, or al-Arous, and is the oldest minaret still standing on any mosque in the Muslim world.

According to a tradition dating at least as far back as the sixth century, the head of John the Baptist lies buried beneath the great mosque. In 2001, Pope John Paul II visited Damascus and stopped in at the mosque, mainly for purpose of paying homage to the saint's relics. It was the first time in 14 centuries a pope had visited the site. The mosque is also generally regarded by Muslims as the place where Jesus Christ (the Prophet Issa) will return at the End of Days—specifically he is expected to appear, or come down from the sky, at the Issa Minaret, named in his honor, and it is said also that accompanying him will be the Prophet Muhammad and the Mahdi, or Twelfth Imam, of Shia doctrine. Additionally, the mosque is also home to the tomb of Saladin, a factor certainly enhancing its heritage significance.

### ***Historical Context***

So why would jihadists want to bomb such an important site—and particularly why given its potential as a place of historic *musalaha*, or reconciliation? The reasons may have to do with its somewhat checkered past and having played a rather pivotal role in one of the most famous schisms in history. In addition to the link to John the Baptist, the mosque, or more specifically its grounds, is where the head of Hussein ibn Ali was exhibited to the public by the Umayyad leader, Yazid I, whose forces defeated Hussein at the historic Battle of Karbala on October 10, 680. The mosque's entrance gate, known as known as » Bab as-Sa'at «, is where the survivors of Karbala were made to stand for 72 hours, and there is also a white pulpit that was erected on the spot where Hussein's son, Ali ibn Hussein, addressed Yazid's court.

It is in this historical context, then, that the attack on the Umayyad Mosque in late 2013 took place. The reaction among the local community ,even with all the other violence plaguing the country, was one of shock and dismay —and both the local community, and the government, have made a concerted determination that the mosque must be restored, as near as possible, to its previous condition.

### ***Damage to Umayyad Mosque***

That effort is in fact well underway. Damage to the mosque included a direct hit upon the large mosaic decorating the external façade. Known as the “al-Kabir ”mosaic ,the magnificent work of artistry is believed to be a representation of“ paradise ”,and experts think it is one of the earliest examples of ornamentation in the Islamic era, given that it portrays neither humans nor animals. The restoration is being directed by two Palestinian archaeological experts, Burhan al-Zaraa and Muhammad al-Kayed, who are assisted by students from Damascus University and the Institute of Archaeology. Al-Zaraa and Al-Kayed were living in the Palestinian camp of Yarmouk ,but were forced to flee when the conflict escalated in .2012 Al-Zaraa’s family hails originally from the Palestinian city of Haifa, while Al-Kayed has roots in Nazareth ,yet both appear destined to play key roles in the restoration of Syria’s damaged cultural heritage.

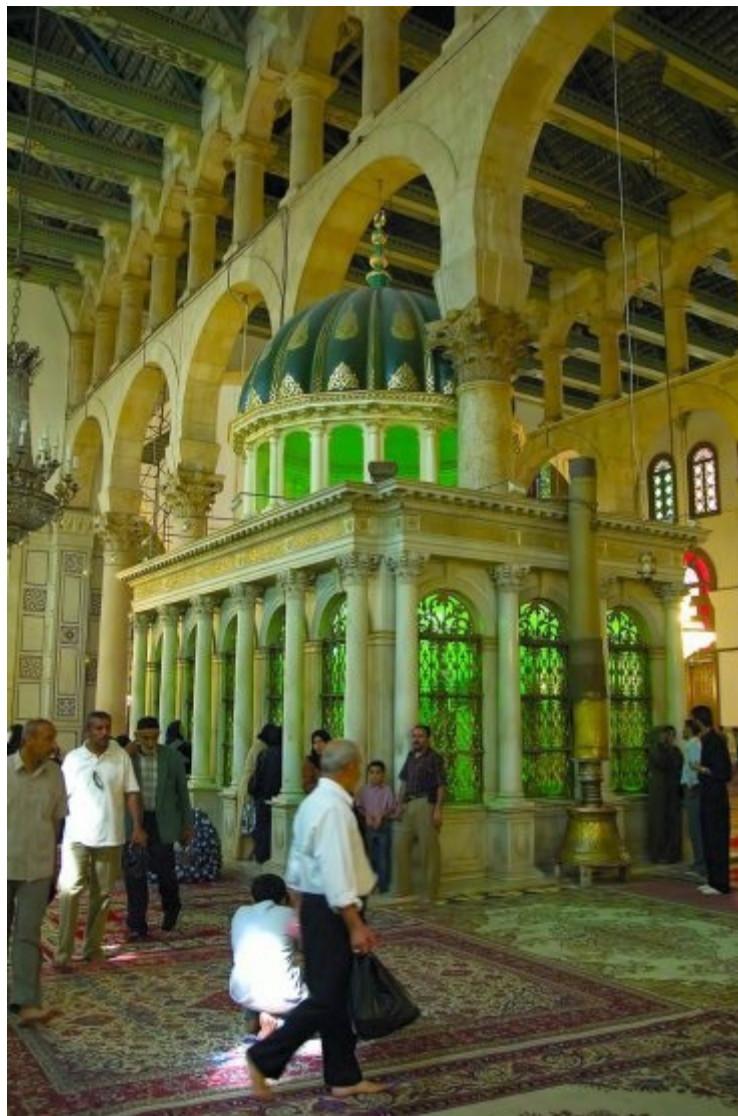


Palestinian archeologists Burhan al-Zaraa and Muhammad al-Kayed work at restoring the mosaic.

Measuring 16 by 16 meters, the damaged mosaic decorates the courtyard of the mosque. The shell blew out a one square meter section of the montage



and also destroyed the main support beam .This observer had an opportunity to tour the site and meet with the members of the restoration team, some of whom explained that the restoration process involves several phases, including removal of the metal grid embedded within the old cement and thoroughly cleaning it so as to provide increased support to the restored panel. Some of the staff and students are also involved in restoring other mosaics, and the team makes use of a classroom and workshop space set up for them at the Citadel of Damascus, a large medieval fortified palace that is part of the Ancient City of Damascus, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Other areas of the Great Mosque of Damascus—also damaged in the mortar barrage—have already been repaired.



Shrine of John the Baptist inside Umayyad Mosque



# **Chapter 4**

## **‘This Has Never Happened in Our Country’**

*“Go back as far as you will into the vague past, there was always a Damascus. In the writings of every century for more than four thousand years, its name has been mentioned and its praises sung. To Damascus, years are only moments, decades are only flitting trifles of time. She measures time, not by days and months and years, but by the empires she has seen rise, and prosper and crumble to ruin. She is a type of immortality”.*

**-Mark Twain-**

The reconstruction of ‘paradise’ at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus isn’t the only mosaic restoration project the Syrian students are at work upon. A much larger artifact, one which in fact sustained far more damage, is the Berhalia mosaic.

It was in mid—July of 2013 that DGAM received an urgent message from the village of Berhalia 30 kilometers west of Damascus, regarding a destroyed mosaic. The antiquity in question had been shattered, seemingly beyond repair, yet it might be possible, said the villagers, to recover the pieces of it from the rebels who had taken possession of them. The thousands of small—colored tiles, called tesserae, were initially impossible to identify because the archaeological context had been substantially demolished, as had the building which housed the relic. But the mosaic chips were discovered to

depict scenes from Syrian history. It was also discovered that the surface area of the composition had been approximately 60 square meters in size, making it larger even than the al-Kabir mosaic at the Umayyad Mosque

Decorated with geometrical ornaments, the Berhalia antiquity consists of two rectangular panels. One of these features an orthogonal pattern of perpendicular, intersecting four—pointed stars in tangent, the overlapping sectors forming lozenges, alternately recumbent and upright. The second, only partially conserved, is decorated with a large star of two interlaced squares inscribed in a circle .The heaps of tesserae date to around the second half of the fourth century, said Dr. Komait Abdalla, director of DGAM's scientific laboratories.



Great discussion in the mosaic restoration laboratory at Damascus Citadel

### ***Tesserae from the Maelstrom***

What transpired leading to the tiles ending up in DGAM's possession is worth relating. A local resident in Berhalia, apparently a former rebel sympathizer who had also been a student at Damascus University, took an interest in the mosaic, located not far from the home he and his family had been forced to flee months earlier. Contact was then made with Syrian army units in the area. A meeting took place that included a delegation of local citizens and a group of rebel militiamen, some of whom had been known to the villagers before the crisis erupted. It was the militiamen who had possession of the small pieces of the 15—century old mosaic. The people of Berhalia, like so many other Syrians this observer has met, feel deeply connected to their cultural heritage .Spare the country's antiquities from the ravages of war—this was their message .An eyewitness reported that the hardened fighters appeared somehow moved ,and soon a delegation of specialists in archaeological preservation left Damascus for Berhalia village to investigate.

Some locals hint that money may have changed hands as well, but not wanting to encourage would—be black market entrepreneurs, no one is saying for sure. One member of the community put it this way“ :Who really cares much one way or another ,given the continuing maelstrom here, as long as a part of Syrian cultural heritage remains under its citizens 'protective care ”?It is a sentiment this observer has heard expressed more than a few times by Syrians desperately wanting an end to the violence and the soonest possible return to normal life.



The mosaic in Barada Valley

At any rate, more than a thousand pounds of tesserae, each piece measuring approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  cm by  $\frac{3}{4}$  cm, were transported by military—style vehicle to Damascus for safekeeping. It was at this point that Professor Maamoun Abdulkarim ,DGAM's director ,along with some of his colleagues, made it their personal mission to not only preserve the pieces, but actually restore the antiquity to its original state. The piles of tesserae were moved to Syria's Archaeological Scientific Reconstruction Laboratories.

One of several rare mosaics discovered in the Damascus region, the mosaic of Berhalia is now progressing towards restoration. Supervision is being handled by Muhammad Kayed and Burhan al-Zaraa, whose work at the Umayyad Mosque is discussed in chapter three .When the project is complete, the mosaic will be exhibited in the nine and a half century—old Citadel of Damascus.



### ***Tea and Pastry and a Talk with Syrian Students***

As with the other rehabilitation efforts, Al-Zaraa and Kayed are being assisted in the Berhalia restoration by a team of students, 15 of them altogether, a group of young people who seem acutely conscious of the vast eons of time catching forty winks in the tesserae pieces balanced gingerly in their hands. In the course of researching this book and visiting damaged archaeological sites throughout Syria, this observer had an opportunity, in May of 2014, to visit with this remarkable and skilled team of students. And as four of them took a break from their work one day, hospitably offering me tea and a local pastry, I felt comfortable posing a few questions. Their answers were given spontaneously and in no certain order. Fortunately, I had the assistance of Nuha, a Damascus University student of Arabic and English translation. Nuha is from a village near Homs, but spends her time these days in Damascus due to the many security problems in her area. Below are excerpts from the conversation which took place that day, with names changed at the students' request.

**Q: How does it make you feel, as you go about this work you are doing, knowing there are people in Syria committing atrocities of the sort seen in some of the videos that have been uploaded to YouTube? Are you afraid? Do you worry about getting kidnapped?**

*(The first to answer was Hanan, a twenty-something student of pharmacology from Latakia who since last winter has been volunteering her time on archaeological restoration efforts.)*

A: Like most of the world, and I believe like just about everyone in Syria, certainly among my friends and fellow students—we are horrified by what is happening, especially by groups such as ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra, in eastern Syria. This has never happened in our country, and it certainly is not and never has been part of our secular culture. But what can we do about it? Our army is making big sacrifices to stop it so we can return to a normal life. Yes, I am afraid, and so are most of our friends. We take care and we go to classes and return to our homes before dark. Our restoration work is done in the center of Damascus which so far has been mainly safe, although last year 17 students were killed or wounded by a rebel mortar at Damascus University. We usually stay home at night, but here in Damascus security is better than in the villages and countryside, so if it has been quiet for a few days we might

go to a cafe and meet with friends. It is true that there are many kidnappings, but usually those held for payment or ransom are known to be from rich families or an important political personality. I am not part of these groups. Unfortunately, like more than half of the Syrian people who used to work, my father and uncles have no job.



Syrian students working to restore a geometric mosaic panel in damascus citadel

**Q“ :How does it make you feel knowing that the US has begun arming Syrian rebels with anti—tank weapons and other heavy weaponry? Does that increase your level of fear«?**

*Abed ,an engineering student at Baath University in Homs, was the next to speak*

A: It is very scary, because when will this end? Most of my friends believe that outsiders are keeping the war going because they think they can win it. Does the USA really know or understand who they are arming and what the fighters will do after you give them training? Do you think these jihadists love you because you helped them against a nationalist Arab regime which rejects the Zionist occupation of Palestine? We worry about when it will end. Who can stop it if other countries keep feeding the killing? You know very well what has happened to us. More than half of our families have been displaced. How can we ever rebuild our country that we love? When will the war end? What will be left? Sure we are scared. My mother is sick from worrying. She cries every day. We have no idea what became of many of our relatives across Syria. And what about DAASH? They control Al-Raqqa Governorate and now parts of Iraq, and they plan to create a proto caliphate

of some kind with part of Syria included. We have relatives in Raqqa. Will Syria become like Iraq or Somalia? Or worse? This is what I and all my friends worry about, and we feel powerless to stop or even influence what is happening out there. Like all Syrians, we are exhausted from these years of war. We are so tired and just want it all to end. Are we mistaken? What do you think?

**Q: The media speculates a lot these days about ISIS or DAASH—type groups because they appear to be the most extreme offshoot of Al-Qaeda and are killing Shia Muslims and Christians more or less where they find them. How do you and your friends view DAASH?**

*The question was taken by Zeina, a Palestinian business student, whose family in Yarmouk camp lost its home and business to jihadist militia in 2012.*

A: Ok, this is what happened. Most of these groups we never heard of, but a few years ago, there were a few reports about extremist jihadist groups in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. We just assumed they were crazy or joking. I never dreamed they could get support and operate here because Syria is, and has historically been, very secular, and we have always respected others' political opinions, ethnic backgrounds and religions. We have never experienced this kind of hatred. It is true that in Syria we share festivities with all religions and traditions, and we like to do so because we learn from them, and we all enjoy other people's backgrounds and culture. We are not religious fanatics in Syria and never have been. Hopefully we never will be. This is natural, and normal— isn't it—?to share our neighbors traditions? You do it in your country, I am sure. I know you do, because we have family in America and also in Europe.

So we in Syria were as surprised as anyone when DAASH came here and started imposing crazy rules on us—especially on women. Women are being treated like slaves. What is wrong with these gangs? They are not Muslims at all, in my opinion. They are perverted, in my opinion. I am religious. I am Muslim. I am Sunni like they claim to be, and I have studied the Holy Koran all my life. I try to follow its teachings, but I have never found the kind of nonsense they claim to be 'true' Islam. Have they ever studied the Koran? For sure, some Sheiks incite them.

**Q: With all that is happening outside of Syria's Ancient Citadel located here in the Old City of Damascus how do you feel about being here and doing this work nearly every day?**

*At this point, Jilan, up until now quiet, spoke out. Jilan is an English Literature student at*

*Damascus University.*

A: Oh my God! Are you a psychiatrist (laughing)? I need one for sure, and I sometimes wonder myself. My mother asked me this same question not long ago. Some of the many reasons you might find strange, but please allow me to give you a couple.

With Allah as my witness, I feel secure, somehow, being deep inside these ancient walls, and I wish my family were here with me. I worry about them all the time. I feel safe here also because many people have told me that these walls can withstand mortars, which is what we usually receive randomly from rebels based in East Ghouta and areas south of Damascus .Even artillery shells or many bombs cannot reach us. As you see it is so quiet and peaceful in here .You hear no shelling or rockets or jet planes in the sky.

Another thing I like about working on restoring antiquities is that it's as though I am honoring those who came before me in our history and culture .I like to think about what their lives must have been like compared to ours. I feel that I am doing something useful during this terrible time, and that I am showing confidence in my beloved country, that we will somehow get through this and eventually rebuild what has been damaged, what we are doing here in our simple restoration laboratory. Plus I love the friends I have made here !As we work, we have plenty of time to talk and get to know one another. Finally, we sometimes, but not very often these days, meet foreigners who come to see our work and express support for what we are doing here. Thank you for visiting us. I wish American and other international students could come and join us. They would like this work I am sure.

## Damage and Desecration to Religious Sites

While the two restoration projects—the Berhalia and al-Kabir mosaics—both appear on their way to happy and successful conclusions, it should be remembered that these are only small, perpendicular slices of what is in effect a misery index, a vast, mechanical combine, fed by outside forces, that has reaped a seemingly unstoppable harvest of violence ,destruction, and death. And perhaps one of the most serious flashpoints, one of the greatest sources of discord, distress, and factionalism, has been attacks upon religious sites.

Syrian churches, monasteries and mosques, some a thousand or more years old, have sustained widespread damage and destruction in this conflict. Scenes of devastation have resulted not only from combat, but have also been engendered by looting and acts of willful desecration. As the war has raged on, assaults on religious sites have grown more frequent and numerous, with the desecrations, in some cases, becoming particularly perverse in character. In the first part of this section we will look at damage to churches ,while in the second we will assess attacks upon mosques.

### *Churches in the line of fire*

As the war entered its fourth year, more than 100 churches—serving ten percent of Syria’s population, scattered throughout some 2,500 cities and villages—had been damaged or destroyed. This figure was verified by Syrian Ambassador to Russia Dr. Riad Haddad in a meeting in Moscow with Russian Patriarch Vladimir Mikhailovich Gundyayev Kirill ,primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. The meeting took place on 3/26/14. Among the more interesting disclosures to come out of it is that places of religion are now being targeted more frequently than schools or hospitals, often for political purposes that include terrorizing Christians or provoking a Sunni—Shia sectarian war. What follows is an incomplete list of damaged churches and monasteries that was made available by Patriarch Kirill’s office:

Church or shrine	Denomination	Governorate/ Region	Place
		Damascus and	

Patriarchate	Greek Catholic	district	Bab Sharqi
St Vincent de Paul's Church	Roman Catholic	Damascus and district	Bab Tuma
St Paul's Cathedral	Syriac Catholic	Damascus and district	Bab Sharqi
St Cyril's Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Al-Qassaa
Holy Cross Church	Greek Orthodox	Damascus and district	Al-Qassaa
Cathedral	Armenian Orthodox	Damascus and district	Bab Sharqi
Prophet Elias' Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Zabadani
Church of Our Lady of Peace	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Harasta
Prophet Elias' Church	Greek Orthodox	Damascus and district	Harasta
St Peter and Paul's Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Darayya
Church	Greek Orthodox	Damascus and district	Darayya
Monastery of Sts Sergius and Bacchus	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
St George's Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
St Leontius' Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
St Elias 'Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
Sts Cosmas and Damian's Church	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
Saint Thomas' Shrine	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
St Saba's	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
Shrine of the Holy Cherubim	Greek Catholic	Damascus and district	Maaloula
St. Barbara's		Damascus and	

Shrine	Greek Orthodox	district	Maaloula
Shrine of Mar Elias	Greek Orthodox	Damascus and district	Maaloula
Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation	Greek Catholic	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Al-Hasakah
Church of the Martyrs	Armenian Catholic	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Al-Raqqa
Christian Education Centre	Catholic	Al-Hasakah ,Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Al-Raqqa
Family fraternity )care centre for the disabled(	Catholic	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Deir ez-Zor
Sts Sergius and Bacchus 'Church	Greek Catholic	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Al-Tabaqa
St Gregory the Illuminator's Church	Armenian Catholic	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Al-Hasakah
Church and Monastery of the Capuchin Fathers	Roman Catholic	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Deir ez-Zor
Church of Our Lady	Syriac Orthodox	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Deir ez-Zor
New Church of Tabaqa	Interdenominational	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Madinat al-Thawra
Holy Cross Church	Armenian Orthodox	Al-Hasakah ,Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Tell Abiad
Church of Our Lady	Syriac Orthodox	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Qamishli
St Thomas 'Church	Syriac Orthodox	Al-Hasakah ,Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Hasakah - Ras al-Ayn
Our Lady's Church	Armenian Orthodox	Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor	Nasra (al-Hasakah(



Cathedral of Constantine and Helen	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Yabroud
Church of Our Lady	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Yabroud
Church and monastery of al-Husn	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Christian Valley
St Joseph's Church	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Jwar al'-Afs
Church of St John Chrysostom	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Hawash
Church of the Holy Belt	Syriac Orthodox	Homs and districts	Homs city
St Michael's Church and Cemetery	Greek Orthodox	Homs and districts	Homs
St George's Church	Syriac Orthodox	Homs and districts	Sadad
St Michael's Church	Syriac Orthodox	Homs and districts	Sadad
St Sergius 'Church	Syriac Orthodox	Homs and districts	Sadad
Mar Elias Monastery	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Rablah
Mar Elias Church	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Al-Qusayr
Monastery of Saint James the Mutilated	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Qara
St. Michael's Church	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Qara
Our Lady of Peace Cathedral	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Homs - Bab al-Sebaa
Church of the Dormition of Our Lady	Greek Catholic	Homs and districts	Homs - Bab al-Sebaa
Monastery of the Jesuit Fathers	Roman Catholic	Homs and districts	Homs city
Church of the Forty Martyrs	Greek Orthodox	Homs and districts	Homs city
Archbishopric	Greek Catholic	Aleppo	Aleppo

Cathedral of the Dormition	Greek Catholic	Aleppo	Aleppo
Chakra Church	Greek Catholic	Bosra ,Hauran and Jabal al-Arab	Hauran - Chakra
Church of the Annunciation	Greek Catholic	Bosra, Hauran and Jabal al-Arab	Hauran-Namir
Sts Peter and Paul's Church	Greek Catholic	Bosra, Hauran and Jabal al-Arab	Hauran - Rakham
St John of Damascus 'Church	Greek Catholic	Bosra, Hauran and Jabal al-Arab	Daraa

Desecration incidents at religious sites in Syria have experienced a particularly marked increase since late 2012. When government forces took the town of Yabroud in March of 2014 ,the Greek Catholic Church of Our Lady, particularly the interior of the building, was discovered in a state of near devastation. Icons were found with their faces scratched out, paintings had been slashed, while mosaics were ripped and in some areas chiseled completely off walls. Statues of the Virgin Mary ,Jesus Christ and various saints were smashed; in the aisles ,church pews were crushed and splintered, while crosses, previously adorning walls, lay broken. The desecration also included Bibles, which were collected from various parts of the church, heaped into a mound, and torched. It was a form of destruction identical to that seen by this author in May of 2014—in a visit to the Um al-Zennar Church, or the Church of Saint Mary, also known as the Church of the Holy Belt, in the old city of Homs .Eyewitnesses there claimed that rebels, just prior to evacuating the nearly two millennia old (A.D. 53) religious site, made a bonfire out of a pile of Bibles, apparently as a political message to their adversaries. Upon my arrival, the pit, located in a courtyard in front of the church ,lay still smoldering.

Only months earlier, DAASH had destroyed crosses at the Armenian Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Aleppo, while in December of 2012, in ZarZour ,Syria, a primarily Shia village about 15 miles west of Idlib, Free Syrian Army (FSA) brigades transmuted a Shia Mosque, known as the Hussainia, into a Sunni one, ordering the local population ,in a manner perhaps somewhat reminiscent of the twelfth century crusaders, to convert or face execution.

## ***Saint Elias Church and the Battle for Qusayr***

Qusayr is a strategic village near the Syria—Lebanon border with a pre—conflict population of ,40,000 approximately 25 percent of whom were Christian. The village and its surrounding areas were seized by rebels in 2012 ,at which point it became part of a crucial supply route in the smuggling of weapons and fighters from Lebanon into Syria. A year later, starting in April of 2013 ,government forces began an offensive to retake the area, winning a decisive victory and reestablishing full government control by the first week of June. The campaign received considerable international media attention as it was Hezbollah’s first major military involvement in the Syrian conflict. Today calm has been restored, but the village’s damaged places of worship continue to serve as painful reminders of the assault upon our global heritage .One damaged site—one of many unfortunately—is the Mar Elias Church.



Maaloula—Mar Thecla Monastery, Church of John the Baptist-  
view of the effects of the fire from the inside

One of the first indications of what had been going on in this border region came from a visit to the area by BBC reporters on 6/6/13. Among the group was longtime correspondent Lyse Doucet, who described the condition of the Mar Elias Church“ .This was a city where Syrians of many beliefs lived together. The Church of Saint Elias was not just destroyed, it was

desecrated ”,she said standing inside the church amidst smoldering Bibles and stripped icons“ .The social fabric of this society has been ripped apart”.

The church’s massive golden dome was peppered with bullet and shrapnel holes; its marble altar had been shattered .A tableau representing St. Elias had been torched, as had several icons. Across Yarmouk Avenue, a mosque also had been badly damaged, with half of its minaret destroyed, the prayer hall covered with debris from bombardments, and the floor littered with shards of glass.

Most of us view desecration as the targeting of a sacred place or object with the intention of delivering an unambiguous expression of contempt, and it is true that in many instances it takes this form .But desecration can also occur as a result of either armed hostilities or theft and looting. Doucet’s report on the desecration at Saint Elias suggests that all three categories were applicable. A press release from the Vatican’s Fides News Agency reported on 6/13/12 that:

A band of radical militiamen broke into the Greek—Catholic church of St. Elias in Qusayr this morning, near the town of Homs, desecrating it .The church was under rebel control since the fall of the nearby town hall in July 2012 until the beginning of June 2013.The militiamen forced the door, rang the bells in mockery, and laughed at the sacred symbols of the Christian faith with the sole purpose of carrying out a demonstrative act and making a mockery of the Christian community“ .It is the first time, in the ongoing conflict, that such an episode occurs, in which sacred symbols are deliberately hit ”,notes with concern a local source of Fides.

The article goes on to report that few Christians remained in the town, most having taken refuge in the surrounding countryside or with relatives in other Syrian cities—while two separate Fides reports, filed June 9 and June 12, draw attention to an“ ultimatum ”delivered to Christians by an armed faction led by General Abdel Salam Harba. The ultimatum demanded that Christians leave the town within a week. The incursion into the church by the militia was condemned by Catholic priests and authorities, who spoke of an“ attempt of some of the armed gangs to unleash a sectarian war”.

### ***Qusayr’s Christians forced to flee***

According to researcher Hisham Ashkar, by the summer of 2012, after

many months of intense fighting, most of Qusayr had fallen to the rebels .The turning point seems to have occurred on July 9 ,when the FSA took over the town hall, the main headquarters of the government forces, less than 100 meters from Saint Elias Church. However, as early as February of 2012, some 60 to 70 percent of the town's residents were said already to have fled. BBC Correspondent Paul Wood ,who reported from Quasyr at that time, described ominous sectarian tensions he found simmering in the town. Joseph Hanna, a Syrian Army corporal and Christian supporter of the Assad government ,was kidnapped by elements of the FSA after setting up checkpoints and allegedly firing on demonstrators. In response, the kidnapped man's brothers abducted six Sunnis, whose families, in turn ,took 20 more Christians hostage. Finally a deal was struck whereby all abductees were released, but only on the condition that Hanna and his family leave Qusayr permanently. At the same time it was the only overtly sectarian event to have occurred thus far, and most of the people (some ,25,000 both Christians and Muslims, are believed to have exited Qusayr by the end of February 2012) probably fled due to the intensified fighting more so than sectarian fears.



Damages to Saint Elias Church in Qusayr city

But a mere two months later the situation had begun to deteriorate markedly, with more and more radical Islamists, local and foreign, arriving and taking control in the area, encountering, it seems, little to no interference from the FSA. More Christians ,who initially planned to stay despite the fighting, began departing ,and according to Wood, by June 2013, when government forces retook the town, the Christian population was completely

gone except for half a dozen elderly citizens who had refused to leave their homes.

Ashkar reported that during the interim time period many acts of desecration were committed in Saint Elias .For example, images of the crucifixion were torn, a painting of Saint Elias was slashed, the main altar was chipped ,and the left altar was burned. The adjacent room to the left of the altar, the Diaconicon, was also burnt .The Diaconicon is a chamber on the south side of the central apse in Greek Orthodox churches where the vestments ,books, and religious artifacts that are used during Communion services are kept—while sacred vessels are displayed in the Prothesis on the north side of the sanctuary. All three areas ,says Ashkar, were vandalized and desecrated (see Ashkar’s website ,[mostlyoff.wordpress.com](http://mostlyoff.wordpress.com)“ ,The Battle for Qusayr and the Fate of Saint Elias Church.”

Using a series of chronologically sequenced videos, Ashkar describes the desecration and destruction of the church as having occurred in three stages:

### ***The first stage:***

A video uploaded on October 3, 2012 shows an abandoned but nearly intact church. It has sustained some shelling to its roof, due to acts of terrorism, resulting in shell impact holes, broken glass, and fallen chandeliers. Two icons along with books from the templon—a barrier separating the nave from the sacraments on the altar, commonly found in Byzantine churches—are missing, probably stolen, but overall the damage does not seem to constitute desecration per se.

### ***The second stage:***

A video uploaded January 29, 2013 reveals further damage to the church. Some of it might have resulted from shelling, but most appears to have been caused by looting or vandalism .Nearly all items of presumed value are missing, including chandeliers, emblems, and even wooden panels from the main entrance door .As Ashkar describes“ ,There is evidence of vandalism linked to religious zealotry. The marble of the main altar has been chipped, an adjacent altar was burned, an image of the crucifixion was ripped, and many icons are missing”.

### ***The third stage:***

In the retaking of Qusayr by government and Hezbollah forces, the church edifice sustained additional damage from various types of weapons used in the fighting, and here the observations are based upon Lyse Doucet's BBC report of June ,2013 ,7 as well as one other, shot independently and uploaded the following day. Here we can see graffiti, not previously seen in the other videos, scribbled on a wall in the back of the church. At this point what Ashkar describes as a“ graffiti war ”has occurred, between pro and anti—government scribblers, with notations by the former apparently having been added only since the town's retaking. The church is a complete shambles now, with Doucet commenting in her report“ ,The social fabric of this society has been ripped apart”.

Here again, though, the damage in Qusayr was not limited to churches. A perusal of vandalism reports shows that as radical Islamists invade an area in greater and greater numbers, their wrath is directed at Muslims they consider to be heretics. Evidence of this can be seen in the destruction of a 200—year —old tomb inside the Grand Mosque of Qusayr, allegedly carried out by the Shield of Islam Brigade.

### ***Damaged and Desecrated Mosques***

By June of ,2014 after nearly three and a half years of fighting ,a frightening number of mosques in Syria had been damaged ,destroyed, or desecrated. The following is a partial list of mosques which sustained damage roughly in the first year and a half of the conflict. The time period covered extends from late July of 2011 to early September of 2012:

<b>Governorate/Region</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>The Damages</b>
Homs	Bab al-Sebaa	July2011 ,21	Damage to a Mosque and its minaret
Deir ez-Zor	-	August 10, 2011	Damage to Othman bin Affan Mosque and its minaret
Homs	-	September 10, 2011	Damage to Sa'd ibn Mu'adh Mosque
		January,31	



Homs	-	2012	Damage to Al-Rifai Mosque
Homs	Talbiseh	February 3, 2012	Damage to Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas Mosque
Homs	Rastan	February 5, 2012	Destruction inside a Mosque
Homs	Bab Amr	February 23, 2012	Destruction in al-Anwar Mosque
Homs	Bab Amr	February 23, 2012	Damage to Al-Samman Mosque
Homs	Bab Amr	,2012 February 24	Destruction in al-Jilani Mosque
Hama	Halfaya	February 25, 2012	Damage to a Mosque
Homs	Bab Amr	February 27, 2012	Damage to Al-Jouri Mosque
Daraa	Hraak	,2012March 6	Damage to al-Omari Mosque
Homs	Bab al-Dreeb	March 9, 2012	Damage to al-Hanblah Mosque and its minaret
Homs	Jab al-Jandali	March 14, 2012	Damage to the minaret of Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz Mosque
Aleppo	-	March 15, 2012	Damage to the Great Umayyad Mosque
Daraa	-	March 16, 2012	Damage to a Mosque
Homs	Bab Houd	March,24 2012	Damage to al-Qassme Mosque
Homs	Bab al-Sebaa	March 28, 2012	Massive Destruction of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas Mosque
Daraa	Dael	March 28, 2012	Damage to a Mosque
Homs	Rastan	March 31, 2012	Damage to the Ahmadi Mosque
Homs	Rastan	March 31, 2012	Damage to the Al-Mahmoud Mosque
Homs		April 3, 2012	Burning of Dar es Salaam Mosque
Homs	Houla	April 62012 ,	Damage to Farouq Mosque
Homs	Qusayr	April 112012 ,	Damage to al-Rahman Mosque

Homs	-	April 152012 ,	Damage to the Khalid Ibn al-Walid Mosque, along with other Mosques
Homs	Khalidiya	April 16, 2012	Damage to a Mosque
Homs	Hamidiyeh	May 30, 2012	Burning of Shaykh `Umar Mosque
Homs	-	June 3, 2012	Damage to Jamaluddin Mosque
Damascus	Mezzeh	June 62012 ,	Damage to the Akram Mosque
Homs	Talbiseh	June 162012 ,	Damage to al-Mustafa Mosque
Hama	Houla	June 172012 ,	Burning of the Houla Mosque
Damascus	Harasta	June 21, 2012	Damage to the Shukr Mosque
Homs	Khalidiya	June 24, 2012	Destruction of the Anas bin Malik Mosque
Homs	Talbiseh	July 2, 2012	Damage to the minaret of the Ali Ibn Abi Taleb Mosque
Homs	Talbiseh	July 9, 2012	Damage to the Sa`d ibin Abi Waqqas Mosque
Damascus	Al-Midan	July 22, 2012	Damage to al-Thuriya Mosque
Hama	Houla	July 28, 2012	Damage to al-Shuhada Mosque
Aleppo	Salaheddine	July 28, 2012	Damage to Hamza Mosque
Aleppo	Minnigh	July 302012 ,	Destruction of Mosque and minaret
Homs	Rastan	July 31, 2012	Damage to a Mosque
Latakia	-	July 31, 2012	Destruction & desecration of Dorin Mosque
Aleppo	Salaheddine	August 3, 2012	Damage to Salaheddin Mosque
Aleppo	Sayf al-Dawleh	August 4. 2012	Damage to Amneh Mosque
Aleppo	Salaheddine	August,8 2012	Damage to Sa`d Ibn Abi Waqqas Mosque
Aleppo	Kallaseh	August 8, 2012	Damage to al-Musalla Mosque
Aleppo	-	August 8, 2012	Damage to al-Fateh Mosque
Aleppo	-	September 3, 2012	Collapse of the minaret of the al-Rashid Mosque

If we extended the above time period up to the present, there would be more than 2,000 mosques on the list. Damages have included desecrations, and in some cases outright destruction. One mosque which has captured considerable public attention ,is the Great Mosque of Aleppo.

### ***Minaret of the Great Mosque of Aleppo destroyed***

With a pre—crisis population of 3.3 million, Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Some believe its origins date back as far as the sixth millennium BC. In ancient Roman times it was known as Beroea. Though formerly a thriving commercial hub and Syria's largest city, Aleppo has been badly affected by the war and currently suffers from shortages of water, flour and electricity. There has been widespread destruction ,and disease has become a major public health problem because of the rancid and festering piles of garbage.

The great mosque is located in Aleppo's Old City. It was originally built in the 8th century, though apparently was destroyed and then rebuilt in the 13th century. According to local tradition, the initial construction was commenced by the Ummayyad caliph al-Walid I in 715 and completed by his successor, Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik, in 717. The remains of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, are said to be housed in a tomb at the site. On 4/24/13 ,the mosque's 148—foot high minaret was destroyed. The place of worship had been the center of fighting for months and had already suffered extensive damage. Rebel fighters from the group Jabhat al-Nusra, according to state media, blew up the minaret themselves while attempting to place the blame on government forces.

Earlier, on 13 October 2012, serious damage to the mosque was sustained during clashes between the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Army forces. President Bashar al-Assad issued a presidential proclamation to form a committee to repair the mosque by the end of 2013, but the project never got started—the Great Mosque was seized by rebel forces in early 2013, and as of June 2014 it remained in rebel hands, located within an area of heavy fighting. Antique furnishings and intricately sculpted colonnades have been charred; valuable Islamic relics have been ransacked; and ancient artifacts, including a box purported to contain a strand of the Prophet Muhammad's

hair, have all been looted and offered for sale in Turkey.

The day of April 24, 2013 saw an exchange of heavy weapons fired between the opposing sides. The Syrian Arab News Agency reported that members of Jabhat al-Nusra detonated explosives inside the minaret ,while rebels claimed the destruction was due to Syrian Army tank fire. Each side blamed the other.

“This is like blowing up the Taj Mahal or destroying the Acropolis in Athens ”,said UNESCO Director—General Irina Bokova, expressing distress over the affair“ .This mosque is a living sanctuary”.

Bokova’s concerns were echoed by Helga Seeden, professor of archaeology at the American University of Beirut.

“This is a disaster ”,Seeden told the Associated Press“ .In terms of heritage, this is the worst I’ve seen in Syria. I’m horrified”.



The Umayyad Mosque courtyard with the Ayyubid minaret before destruction



The Umayyad Mosque courtyard with the Ayyubid minaret after destruction

### ***Damages to the interior of the Great Mosque***

Several eyewitnesses, visitors from the neighborhood who were allowed access, have painted a bleak picture of damage to the interior of the mosque as well. The haram ,or“ sanctuary ”,to the south of the courtyard, is partially destroyed, as is the shrine to John the Baptist’s father, located along the southern wall. The courtyard lies at the center of the complex, connecting different parts of the mosque that are positioned behind the colonnaded areas, and is said by Islamic scholars to be unique for its alternating black and white floor, which forms intricate geometric designs. Two ablution fountains, or sacred containers, used during the ceremonial act of pre—prayer washing, had their roofs damaged by shelling ,while similar damage struck the roof over the main hall and caved in the once—beautiful and highly ornamented Mehrab al-Halaweah school.

The Great Mosque’s minbar“) pulpit (“has been disassembled and removed—to a secure place, according to some members of the Free Syrian Army, although DGAM suspects it may have been smuggled into Turkey. The minbar is known as the Minbar of Nur ad-Din Zangi, named after the twelfth century atabeg, or governor of the province of Aleppo. Nur ad-Din ordered the construction of two minbars, the first of which was taken to Jerusalem

and placed in the al-Aqsa Mosque. The second minbar he directed to be installed in Aleppo. As such, the missing artifact is of enormous historical significance, making its recovery of prime importance.

Elsewhere in the mosque, three naves of the main hall, all lined with 18 quadrangular columns with cross—vaults, have been partially destroyed, while naves have been damaged in three other halls that abut the sides of the courtyard. The eastern and northern halls each have two naves, both of them, in both halls, badly damaged, while the north hall interior has been seriously charred by fire. An ornately carved mihrab“) niche (”has also been damaged, while other parts of the mosque, mostly dating from the 12th century, have been heavily marred by gunfire and artillery shells.

A religious edifice symbolizes a religious community. Thus an attack on an edifice is, in effect, an attack on the community. Indeed, in many cases it appears that the wrath of the fundamentalists was directed in reality at the community more so than its symbols. The history of this region suggests that most of these religious edifices will be rebuilt at some point. It may prove far more difficult, but hopefully divisions within the society can be mended as well, possibly through reconciliation ceremonies, attended, perhaps, by politicians, notables, and religious figures. As for the rest of us, we all, every one of us—regardless of our religious affiliations—bear the collective damage to our global cultural heritage.



Interior damages to the Great Mosque – the western part





Interior damages to the Great Mosque – the prayer hall

***An international public challenge: No demand means no markets, which means the looting will stop***

With more than 10,000 archaeological sites, Syria is perhaps sui generis among nations. As former UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi put it at a UNESCO meeting in early 2014, “Few countries are as rich culturally, have had such a glorious past, are so important for what we are, all of us, for all the things that make, have made, human civilization”.

Since 1963, Syrian domestic law has forbidden unauthorized excavation and export of antiquities, and the statute seems to have been pretty effective: prior to the outbreak of fighting in 2011, there was no illegal trade in excavated treasures from the Syrian Arab Republic. But as has been documented in this and previous chapters, the chaos of the ongoing conflict has given looters and buyers unprecedented opportunities.

It is well known—as Erin Thompson, international professor of art crime at the City University of New York reminds us—where the major markets for these stolen objects exist. This puts a special onus upon these countries and



their citizenry, a responsibility to lead the campaign to halt the theft of humanity's shared heritage. As this author was advised by the director of the National Museum at Palmyra“ ,I am not so worried about the sellers .I am more worried about the buyers who create and sustain this tragedy ”.We can all help, he added, by simply refusing to buy stolen Syrian antiquities.

Some buyers are fully aware that the objects they are purchasing from war—torn Syria are stolen; some are not. But we all ,every one of us, have a choice to make. We can abet and witness the continuation of the looting, or we can stop it cold. The problem is in our hands, and for certain we can help solve it. Many may recall that it was the international public itself that pressured governments to dramatically curtail elephant poaching. In one country after another, people decided that ivory trinkets were less beautiful than the herds of magnificent, intelligent animals living in a sophisticated community in their natural habitats. We have avoided the decimation of some of the world's most iconic wildlife ,and it seems, as customs have evolved, we have come to get along rather splendidly without ivory jewelry, buttons, baubles ,and such. Admittedly the problem hasn't gone away completely. There are still markets for black rhinos and other species ,some of whose body parts are still fancifully claimed to cure everything from impotence to hangovers. But just as we have plenty of solutions of these maladies, we can also do without buying stolen Syrian antiquities.

# **Chapter 5**

## **A Clarion Call to the International Community To Protect and Restore Syria's Cultural Heritage...Our Heritage**

*See where Capella with her golden kids  
Grazes the slope between east and north:  
Thus when the builders of the pyramids  
Flung down their tools at nightfall and poured forth*

*-Edna St. Vincent Millay-  
'Epitaph for the Race of Man'*

While the existing laws and agreements are important ,much more needs to be done, both on the international and national levels, to stop the looting and the destruction of our past and to preserve our global heritage, both for the present and future generations. We owe humanity no less.

Existing principles, standards and rules of public international law ,could be sufficient if governments possessed the political will to put an end to the importation and sale of stolen antiquities. International customary law, plus multilateral conventions and bilateral treaties—buttressed in some cases by municipal laws enacted in several UN member states—have all been adopted in this area ,but unfortunately have not achieved their potential. Lootings, thefts, illegal excavations and smuggling of irreplaceable antiquities have continued, even in the face of public outcries in past decades over reports of cultural heritage destruction in Afghanistan ,Bosnia ,Serbia and Iraq.

What is missing is a widespread, transnational governmental commitment to cooperate. Political leaders, along with elements of power structures residing in certain countries, including some business interests harboring criminal intent ,have far too often turned a blind eye to unprovenanced archaeological artifacts in the marketplace. This amounts to implied consent to the selling of our past, and it has diluted and undermined the legal mechanisms and the enforcement of applicable national and international laws. The result of this is that our global cultural heritage in Syria remains under serious threat .Changing this is an admittedly Sisyphean task, but with

persistence ,and by enlisting our fellow citizens globally, we can succeed.

## Recommendations

To achieve these goals, the following recommendations are submitted with hopes that the global community will act upon them without further delay. If undertaken, these measures will help to create the only force that can move governments and international institutions to act—international public involvement at local levels. In the main, this call is for grass roots initiatives in local communities, hopefully burgeoning forth in every UN member state, to pressure elected representatives and other government officials to act decisively for and with the international public to preserve and protect our threatened global heritage.

The first recommendation is to more precisely define that which constitutes cultural property, and make a determination as to what exactly is worthy of protection by the international community. Current international law does not offer a standardized and accepted definition of cultural property; hence states are largely able to decide the matter for themselves. This they generally do in terms of that property which is deemed culturally significant, and which defines and comprises their national heritage. Indeed, the idea of “culture” itself is subjective, so any effort at evaluating what property is central to the identity of a state or an ethnic group will naturally lead to divergent views and intra—state political maneuvering.

One way to help facilitate state participation in law enforcement with respect to protecting cultural property is to make the legal definition of cultural property narrow. An overbroad definition can lead to excessive or precarious application as well as overzealous enforcement. A weakening of the legal mechanisms can be the end result of this. The legal definition of protected antiquities must be just broad enough to include those objects and sites generally viewed as having global importance. Countries that take the time to assure that their laws reflect these standards will help all of us protect our global heritage. As Fechner has pointed out, the definition of what must be protected during armed conflict should be based solely on considerations of the scientific, artistic, or historic importance of the cultural property[3].

Some objects have no importance for science or historians, and it is unrealistic to expect a global system to care for every object of only limited, local interest or modest aesthetic value[4].

What is proposed is the creation of a legal regime that would establish “intensities” of protection at the local, national, and international levels—with objects ranked both according to their archaeological importance and also on the basis of their significance or value, say, to small groups of people, as opposed to nations or the whole of humankind. A system that prioritizes what property should be protected during armed conflict is, in the long run, more likely to be successful at preserving humanity’s most important cultural heritage. Such a system would be infinitely more workable than a broad, all—encompassing regime leading to a weakening of legal strictures, or, conversely, one so narrow it would exclude worthy objects.

What is called for, then, is the creation by the United Nations of a legal regime to establish defined “intensities” of protection—at the local, national, and international levels—tailored, as Fechner recommends, to whether or not the objects hold cultural significance to relatively few or to the general global community. Dr. Emma Cunliffe, of Durham University in Britain, has argued that the establishment of an accepted standard definition of cultural property warranting protection would help to quickly develop an improved body of law at the international level that would in turn encourage more states to actively participate in enforcement<sup>[5]</sup>.

The additional Protocol I to the 1954 Hague Convention, discussed in chapter 2, already establishes that the destruction of cultural property during an armed conflict qualifies as a grave breach of the Geneva legal framework, and is therefore punishable as a war crime. There is a role for the International Criminal Court to play in prosecuting and punishing those actors responsible for such destruction, and this would remain true even should the acts occur outside of an armed conflict. States are obligated to apply the war crime designation to any and all events in which cultural objects become deliberately targeted, not just those events directly related to armed conflicts.

Another measure that would dramatically strengthen protections for cultural heritage property, and one that should be undertaken without delay, is to have international trusteeship legal standards made mandatory and applicable to all global cultural sites irrespective of location. This can be done while preserving the status of global heritage property within the previously mentioned framework of intensities, and could also be achieved in a manner consistent with the domestic jurisdiction of in situ countries. Under the proposed model, countries would have an undiluted trusteeship fiduciary duty

to protect the heritage within their borders for future generations. Enforcement of the international trusteeship system could involve UN—promulgated punitive sanctions for countries failing to protect their custodial heritage property. As trustees, UN member states would be enforcers with the primary responsibility to preserve and protect global heritage sites and artifacts within their territorial jurisdictions. Should governments not have the capacity to meet their trusteeship obligations, states would be obliged to apply for assistance from the international community. Again, measures such as sanctions could be used to enforce these obligations and penalize those states that fail to comply.

Also desirable is a grass roots campaign, undertaken globally, to encourage and pressure our governments to ensure the strict application and enforcement of available laws. This campaign would be important especially in countries that have already become signatories to the relevant existing international conventions but whose governments have been lackadaisical with respect to implementation. For example, as Cunliffe has pointed out, one shortcoming of the international community has been a failure to focus enhanced protection upon those sites and monuments listed in the International Registry for Cultural Property under Special Protection, as provided for under the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention<sup>[6]</sup>.

Another essential facet of an international campaign is for citizens to petition their governments to ratify, and to more actively support and bring into enforcement within the boundaries of their countries, the two international conventions that play a crucial role in protecting cultural heritage against illicit trafficking. These conventions are a (the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and b (the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects).

Countries that have adopted the 1970 UNESCO convention commit to outlawing the purchase of illegally exported cultural goods and to prohibiting the importation of antiquities stolen from museums or public institutions; they also are obligated to seize and return stolen or illicitly imported cultural goods upon request by the country of origin. Some signatory governments have been laggard about assuming their responsibility under the convention, and their citizens must step forward and assure that they do.

Also required is for those of us whose governments have not done so, to petition for immediate ratification and domestic enforcement of UNIDROIT.



As noted previously, this convention assigns to purchasers the responsibility to ensure that any artifact they are acquiring came into the international market solely through legal channels. It is imperative that the measures adopted by each country include the development and enforcement of national legislation to protect all domestic cultural artifacts.

Another crucial component is for governments to publicly declare and/or reinforce their commitments to cultural heritage protection by increasing their cooperation with all international police agencies working today to stop the transport of stolen Syrian antiquities. Among the police agencies currently most active are the FBI Art Theft Program and the Department of Homeland Security, United States; the Federal Office of Police (FedPol), Switzerland; Arma dei Carabinieri, Italy; Central Office for the Fight against Traffic in Cultural Goods (OCBC), France; the Scotland Yard Metropolitan Police—Art and Antiquities Unit, United Kingdom; Direction of the Fight against crime against goods (DJB) of the Federal Police, Belgium; and the Federal Criminal Police Office—Art Crime Unit, Germany.

Additional exemplary international global cultural heritage initiatives warranting universal governmental and popular support include, but are not limited to, the following:

### ***One Hundred Missing Objects Campaign***

This inspired international instrument is being used with measurable success today in the fight against the illicit traffic of our cultural heritage, and it warrants support by every government. A project of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the initiative presents and distributes through private and public channels a list of cultural goods that have been stolen and whose disappearances have been reported and registered in the INTERPOL database. Though in need of expanded global participation, this effort has worked well and has led to the recovery and return of many stolen Syrian cultural artifacts.

### ***The Object ID Standard***

The international Standard for Object Identification (Object ID) was launched in 1997 by the J. Paul Getty Trust. An efficient tool that warrants public and governmental support, the Object ID Standard (IDS) is used to clearly describe and inventory archaeological, artistic and cultural objects in

order to facilitate their identification in case of theft .The methodology of Object ID is fully compatible with INTERPOL’s database, making it faster to disseminate key information—to the public, to governments and their police agencies—should an object be reported missing.

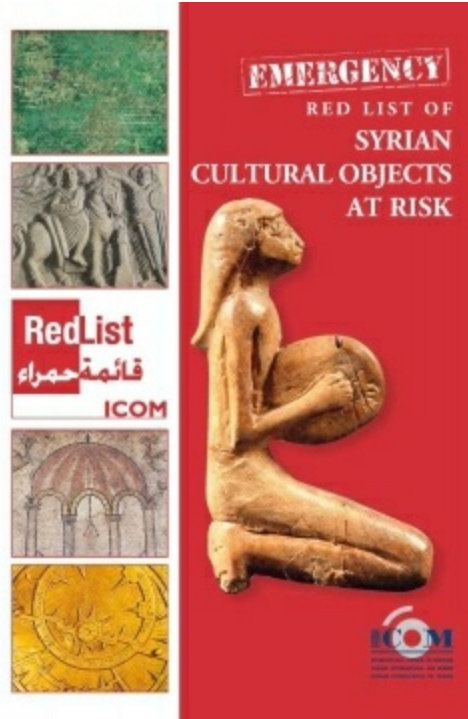
What is required to garner more support of the IDS are capacity—building activities and training for museum and heritage professionals, along with government police and customs agents, on the use and functioning of the IDS with respect to the protection of global cultural heritage artifacts.



### ***Emergency Red Lists.***

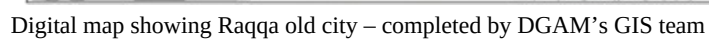
As the owners of our global heritage ,the international public should also urge and direct their governments and fellow citizens to support and distribute ICOM’s Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk.

Along with a dozen other similar Red Lists issued by ICOM, the Syrian Red List is an internationally recognized tool that assists cultural heritage professionals, collectors, and most importantly police and customs officials in identifying objects protected by national legislation that have been smuggled or illicitly traded. ICOM needs the help of us all—informing and working within our communities, museums, and auction houses. Our combined efforts with respect to the Emergency Red List for Syria can make an enormous difference in stopping the international flow of irreplaceable stolen antiquities.



### ***Digital Mapping***

At the national level, a team of Syrian experts is also designing and developing a digital map, based on geographic information system (GIS) technology, to detail the endangered and damaged cultural patrimony on the ground. The inventories and archives of cultural property in Syrian museums continue to be digitized to simplify the identification and registration of any missing artifacts. Testimonies, images and videos from the Syrian public, and from national and international archaeological missions, assist in completing the digitized database. All this collated information helps facilitate a more effective response against trafficking of cultural property out of Syria, and will also allow experts to determine priorities in the urgent maintenance and restoration of archaeological sites and museums damaged in the conflict. The digital mapping system is compatible with international standards and will improve coordination between national and international organizations in the post—conflict rehabilitation of Syria’s historic sites and museums.



Digital map showing Raqqa old city – completed by DGAM's GIS team

## **UNWTO**

The importance of a coordinated response is further illustrated by the awareness-raising joint initiative of UNODC, the United Nations World Tourism Organization and UNESCO urging travellers to support the fight against a number of forms of trafficking, including trafficking in cultural property in Syria.

The UNWTO, of which Syria is among its 156 members, is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. UNWTO has joined with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to urge tourists to become responsible travellers and help fight trafficking in looted cultural heritage artifacts.

The UNWTO campaign - *Your Actions Count: Be A Responsible Traveller* ([www.bearresponsibletraveller.org](http://www.bearresponsibletraveller.org)) - aims to raise awareness among tourists visiting Syria on how they can help fight trafficking by encouraging a better understanding of the major criminal implications hidden behind some decisions taken while travelling. With more than 1 billion tourists travelling the globe each year the tourism sector has strong potential to support the fight to stamp out the scourge of looting cultural heritage.



## ***Cultural Artefacts***

Culture objects such as traditional carvings, pottery and antiques make attractive gifts, but be sure you are not unwittingly buying stolen or illegally excavated or looted artefacts. Everyday, countless sites and monuments across the globe are pillaged, robbing people of their past. Specialized organized crime networks move and sell these goods. The impact that this can have is irreversible with countries and citizens being denied their heritage cultural identities.

Make sure that the souvenirs you take home have a documented and legal history aren't stolen and can be exported. Ask about the origin of what you are buying and always keep in mind your own country's rich history and heritage and how you would feel if this was taken away from you.

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

The amount of cultural goods of licit and illicit provenance sold in the world was approximately US\$ 60 billion in 2014, a 50% increase in ten years. Illicit trafficking of looted cultural heritage artifacts alone is valued at US\$ 7 billion each year, and often involves organized crime groups and criminal networks as well as some of the combatants in the current crisis in Syria.



### **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

#### **BE A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER**

Make sure that the souvenirs you take home have a documented and legal history, aren't stolen and can be exported. Ask about the origin of what you are buying and always keep in mind your own country's rich history and heritage and how you would feel if this was taken away from you.





## **DGAM and the Grass Roots Citizens Campaign to 'Save Syria's History'**

An unprecedented range of effective steps in defense of archaeological and architectural heritage has also been undertaken by Syria's Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums) DGAM .(One of these is a national campaign under the banner“ Syria My Homeland—the National Campaign to Protect Syrian Heritage”.

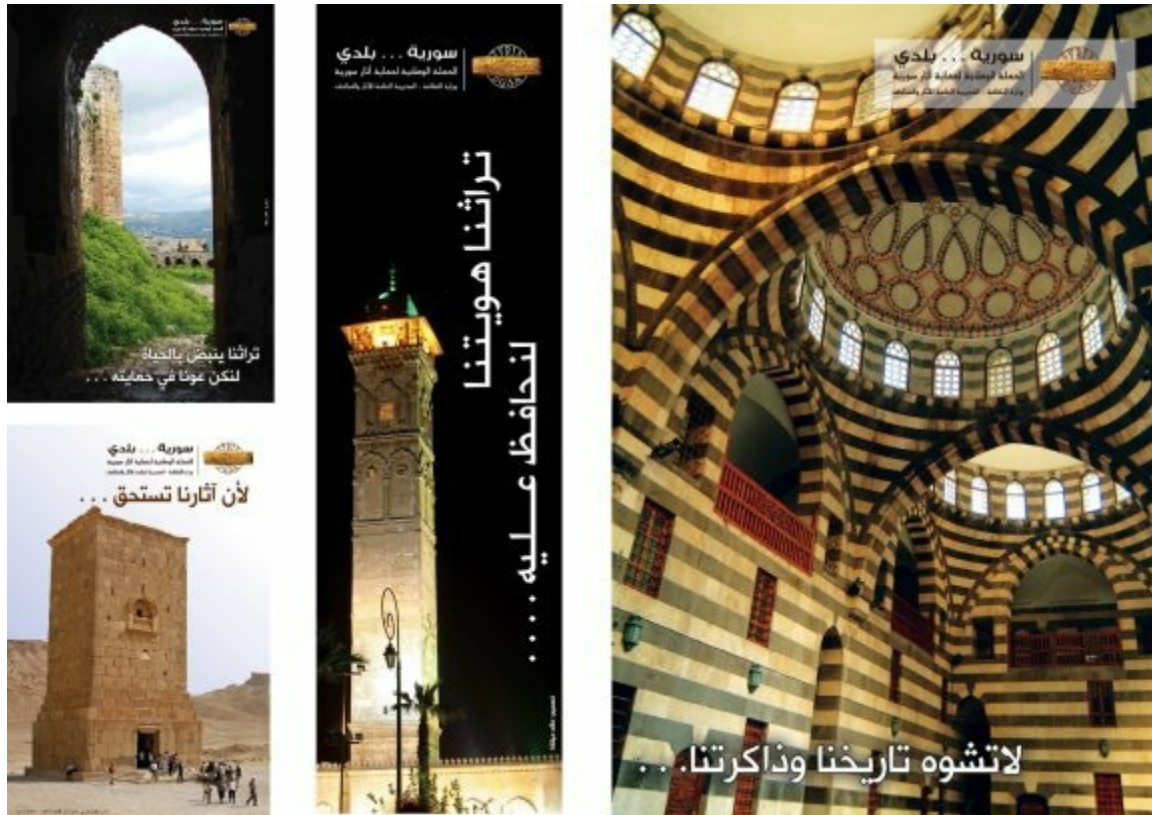
Launched in 2013 to raise local and international awareness of the looting of museums and illegal excavations at archaeological sites ,the campaign additionally serves to remind all Syrian citizens and the international community that our global cultural heritage has no political allegiances, that all must unite to protect Syria's rich cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations.

As part of the effort, posters and audio—visual materials have been disseminated throughout the country, and according to DGAM sources ,this outreach, combined with the apolitical nature of the campaign ,has served to engage Syria's people in actively protecting their cultural heritage, with networks of volunteers from local communicates coming together all over the country. Mobilizing around a common objective—the protection of their unique cultural heritage—these networks within Syria's populace provide additional security, safeguarding museums and protecting archaeological sites from illegal excavations. They have also helped recover looted items of cultural significance, and according to local sources, a growing number of ordinary Syrian citizens are working with local heritage authorities to identify and recover antiquities illegally removed from their place of origin.

One example of this is the Berhalia mosaic, discussed more fully in chapter 4 .With the help of local authorities ,DGAM was able to trasport the object to the national Archaeological Scientific Reconstruction Laboratories in Damascus, where it is now being restored and studied.

Other communities have also provided invaluable help, joining the staff of Syrian museums to enhance security at threatened sites. This type of citizen

activism, despite the current crisis, is happening all over the country, where local populations are assisting, and sometimes taking the lead, in reporting and recovering stolen antiquities.



Printed posters from DGAM AD Campaign to ' Save Syria's History



DGAM's Bookmark

### ***Government sponsored citizen workshops***

Citizens also came together at a government sponsored Workshop Against Illicit Trafficking of Syrian Cultural Property, held in May of 2013 at the National Museum in Damascus. Agenda topics included smuggled artifacts and their historical and cultural significance to the country, as well as local and international regulations against illicit trafficking of cultural property and their effectiveness in light of the latest developments impacting Syria. Also highlighted was the role of the state in promoting awareness among all segments of society concerning antiquities and national heritage.



Workshop poster by DGAM

### ***Independent International Citizen Initiatives***

An excellent report by the Spanish NGO ,Heritage for Peace, offers an encouraging summary of pro bono actions being mounted by any number of non—governmental bodies and organizations internationally, many of them established specifically to address the assault upon our global heritage. In these efforts wide use is being made of social media (Facebook ,YouTube, websites, blogs, etc.), while petitions, media campaigns, lectures, and exhibitions are also achieving important results. One exhibition, documenting the shocking and devastating damage to the cultural heritage of Aleppo ,is entitled“ Civilization and Ashes ”.Compiled by Syrian photographer Hagop Wanesian, the exhibit opened at the Damascus Opera House on .4/7/14 Other citizen initiatives also reported by Heritage for Peace) with links and/or contact information) include the following:

### ***Aleppo Archaeology (AA)***

Founded in 2012, AA has dedicated a Facebook page on the current status of the Ancient City of Aleppo, a UNESCO—designated World Heritage site.

### ***Alliance for the Restoration of Cultural Heritage (ARCH)***

ARCH is a nonprofit organization founded in 2013 which aims to raise awareness on cultural heritage sites threatened by wars. In collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and Blue Shield, ARCH International has created within its organizational structure The Working Group to Protect Syrian Heritage in Crisis .The body includes experts in cultural heritage preservation, media, diplomacy ,history, archaeology and other fields.

### ***(Archaeological Institute of America) AIA***

Based in Boston, USA, the AIA was founded in 1879 and is a nonprofit with a professional, fulltime staff devoted to world archaeology and to fostering public understanding of the material record of the human past. Its efforts with respect to the Syrian crisis have been underway since 2012. These include financial support, twice renewed, of the U.S .Committee of the Blue Shield’s statement on protection of Syrian cultural heritage as well as promotion of a conference at Princeton University, in December 2013, that gathered an array of scholars in heritage, history, and cultural and property law preservation to discuss how to respond to the Syrian crisis.



### ***American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)***

In September 2012 ,Amnesty International, USA requested information from the AAAS’s Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project on human rights—related issues stemming from the escalating conflict in Aleppo. Though focusing mainly on the localization of military heavy

artillery and destruction of the suburban area of the city—contextualized on maps—the report also provides useful information about damage to structures within the Ancient City of Aleppo.



### ***Archaeologik***

Archaeologik is a blog founded in 2010 and maintained from Mainz, Germany. Since 2012, it has shared monthly updates on damage to Syria's archaeological heritage, with links to media sources, and in December 2013 it promoted the publication of a new book on Aleppo ,Ein Krieg zerstört Weltkulturerbe Geschichte, Gegenwart, Perspektiven, edited by Mamoun Fansa.

### ***Archaeology in Syria (NETWORK)***

Archaeology in Syria NETWORK was formed in 2012 from an international team of archaeologists. Its main objectives include connecting those involved with or interested in accumulated multidisciplinary knowledge through archaeological excavation and research in the Near East in general and Syria in particular. Protection of Syrian archaeological heritage through interviews, articles, sharing and updating are promoted on the organization's website and Facebook page.

### ***Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA)***

Based in Strasbourg, France, APSA has documented information about damage to Syria's heritage since ,2012 releasing updates as well as working to raise public awareness about the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The organization was formed from a team of international volunteers, archaeologists and journalists from France, Belgium and Syria.

### ***Blue Shield – International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) and Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS)***

The ICBS was founded in 1996 to protect world cultural heritage sites



threatened by war and national disasters. National committees were subsequently formed in various countries, leading to the establishment of the ANCBS in 2008 .Since 2011, the ICBS has worked on advancing public awareness and protections for Syrian cultural heritage through statements and press releases.



### ***(British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology) BANEA***

BANEA brings together scholars interested in archaeology, ancient history and languages of the Near East. The organization has supported the Syrian heritage cause since 2012, circulating a petition that year calling for protection of the nation's cultural sites .It has also generated discussion on the issue at its last two annual conferences, in 2013 and 2014, with a report on the 2014 meeting having been released by Dr .Emma Cunliffe ,Durham University.

### ***Cultural Heritage in Syria in the current conflict) Heritage in Syria in Danger(***

This initiative was started in 2012 in Denmark where the University of Copenhagen ,and in particular the Cultural Heritage Group (CHG) at the Department of Cross—Cultural and Regional Studies (TORS), are documenting and updating information about the damage to cultural heritage on its website. The site contains text, images, and videos related to the current conditions of heritage sites in Syria. The project, in May 2013, also organized a seminar entitled“ Archaeology and Conflict”.

### ***Culture in Development (CID)***



Based in The Netherlands, CID dedicated a special dossier on its website on damage to Syria's cultural heritage. The organization was founded in 1997.

### ***Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI)***

DAI is a federal agency within the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs devoted to research in archaeology and related fields. It has launched two initiatives in cooperation with the Museum of Islamic Art. One of these is the Syrian Heritage Archive Project ,undertaken in 2013 with the aim of digitizing the museum's inventories, followed in 2014 by a series of lectures entitled *Syrien – eine bedrohte Kulturlandschaft*, to be held in Berlin.



### ***Eyes to Protect Syrian Heritage (a.k.a. Eyes on Heritage)***

Based in Syria, this initiative got underway in 2012 with the aim of documenting cultural heritage destruction via its Facebook page.



### ***Fides News Agency (Fides)***

Fides is a Catholic news agency in Vatican City State. It is part of the congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and promotes missionary activity through the press .In October 2012, Christian churches in Syria appealed to Fides to help“ save the religious, historical and cultural heritage of the country”.

### ***Global Heritage Fund (GHF)***

Founded in 2002 and based in California, USA, GHF is a nonprofit international organization working to protect and preserve significant endangered cultural heritage. GHF offered the first publicly released collation of the damage to Syria's heritage, and continues to provide updates on the situation through its blog.



### ***Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)***

ISESCO has denounced the destruction of mosques and Islamic monuments in Syria ,including the burning of the Umayyad Great Mosque in Aleppo, calling upon the international community to apply political pressure to halt the shelling of the city of Aleppo and its historical and religious monuments. It also convened an Emergency Meeting for Protecting Cultural Heritage to address the endangered heritage in Aleppo“ whether through reconstruction and maintenance or through documentation and inventory of the historical sites that were demolished “.Headquartered in Rabat, Morocco, ISESCO was founded in 1979 with the objective of promoting and consolidating joint action among the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communications.



### ***Oriental Heritage Without Borders (OHWB)***

OHWB is a cultural and scientific association working to promote the protection of Syria's cultural heritage from its headquarters in Berlin,

Germany. Its“ Here is Syria – The Forgotten Heritage ”project collects and shares videos, messages, stories, and photos about the attacks upon the country’s cultural heritage sites, working to raise public awareness through social networks and international organizations.

### ***Saving Antiquities for Everyone (SAFE)***

Founded in New York City, USA, in 2003, SAFE is comprised of professionals from media, advertising, academic, and law enforcement communities working to raise awareness of the vulnerabilities of ancient cultural heritage. SAFE works to promote the protection of Syrian cultural heritage through its website.

### ***World Monument Fund (WMF)***

WMF is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites around the world. It was founded in New York City, USA, in 1965, and today it promotes the safeguarding of Syrian cultural heritage through several projects: a) a website called Crisis in Syria featuring updated information about damage to the country’s cultural heritage; b) a petition to Help Ensure the Survival of Syria’s Cultural Heritage; c) the Heritage in the Crosshairs campaign, which seeks to raise money for the protection of Syrian cultural heritage; d) the 2014 World Monuments Watch highlighting 67 sites from 41 countries, including Syria, that are under threat from war, the environment or economic development; and e) response to an appeal directly from Syrian authorities for help in preserving three key sites :Aleppo’s historic center, Krak des Chevaliers and the medieval fortified city of Qal’at al-Madiq. Also from 2000-2010 WMF worked extensively with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture on the restoration of Aleppo Citadel.

Besides the above, two other potentially very significant initiatives are being launched:

### ***International Campaign for Syrian Cultural Heritage at Risk***

Officially launched by former Italian minister F. Rutelli and leading Italian archaeologist P. Matthiae, the project got underway in Rome in 2013.

### ***Syrian Cultural Heritage Project UNESCO***

Based in Beirut ,Lebanon and commenced in 2014, this project includes damage assessments and a documentation database of Syrian cultural heritage as well as the launching of a communication and public awareness campaign to fight the illicit traffic of Syrian cultural heritage. The latter campaign will include training and capacity building for national cultural heritage stakeholders.

## **Cooperation By Nations**

While all of these undertakings have made an important difference, and in many cases achieved significant victories ,still concerted efforts are needed by whole nations and groups of nations to rescue our global heritage. To that end ,four international, or intergovernmental, organizations are seen as potentially having an especially significant and integral role to play. These are the League of Arab States (AL), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Non—Aligned Movement (NAM). In the totality of their combined memberships ,these organizations encompass a population exceeding two billion people and make up a geographic area covering virtually the whole of the Middle East, indeed a sizeable portion of the earth .There is a potential here that remains untapped, in part due to divided leadership, yet together these bodies and their member states, with an aggregate wealth in the trillions of dollars, have the capacity to become the major positive force in the protection of our shared global heritage, both in the Middle East, which holds the cradle of civilization, and beyond.

Unfortunately, to date, these organizations, like most of us ,have largely shirked their global responsibilities in this area, and for that reason the international public along with their respective governments should and must petition them to act—act to preserve the vital knowledge of our past, which defines and contextualizes who we are. The need here is tremendous. Yet should these awakening international organizations join the campaign to salvage Syria's, and the world's, heritage, they will boost international peace and security as well as dramatically advance worldwide understanding about Islam, Christianity, and the rich heritage of humanity.

### ***The League of Arab States (AL)***

The Cairo—based Arab League was founded in 1945, three years before the Nakba .It is presently a major regional organization of 22 countries, including full membership for Palestine. AL's work is focused on a broad range of issues, from Iraq in the East to Ceuta in the West, and currently the

organization labors to answer foreign interests and designs—by China, Europe ,Russia, the USA and others—on its vastly rich region .EU efforts to block immigration from poor African countries with AL membership is of concern to the organization, as is growing Iranian influence in the oil rich Persian Gulf, as well as the continuing crisis in Syria and the role played by Turkey.



### ***The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)***

Founded in 1969 in Rabat, Morocco, the OIC has a membership of 57 countries and is the largest international organization outside of the United Nations, where it maintains a permanent delegation .The OIC strives to serve the common political, economic, cultural and social interests of the Ummah, asserting in its charter that it aspires to be“ the collective voice of the Muslim world ”.It also endeavors to“ safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony”.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphate after World War I left a vacuum for a pan—Islamic institution, and the 1967 events in Palestine resulted in the establishment of the OIC two years later. In June 2008, the organization revised its charter, pledging to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, and good governance in all member states. Within the revised charter, the OIC emphasizes its support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law, and has frequently expressed its concern about the threat to global culture in the Middle East.



In 2005 ,at the Extraordinary Makkah Summit, OIC leaders adopted a Ten Year Program of Action on the preservation of Islamic culture .As part of this program, the OIC was encouraged to launch an international campaign to protect and preserve our global cultural heritage in Syria. Linking archaeological preservation to its Program of Action would make a great difference in the success of other efforts now underway, both inside and outside of the Syrian Arab Republic.

### ***The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)***

Founded in 1981 in Abu Dhabi, the GCC recently voted to change its name to the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. This six —member organization is headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and with an estimated 3 trillion USD combined GDP, it has become a major regional actor on a range of political and economic issues.

The membership presently consists of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while three rumored additional members may include Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen. Despite the organization’s political differences with Syria’s current government, the GCC continues to anxiously monitor the destruction of cultural heritage sites, sites that have been targeted with looting, illegal excavations, thefts and wanton, politically—driven desecrations.

The GCC member states have some of the fastest growing economies in the world, mostly due to a boom in oil and natural gas revenues, coupled with a building and investment surge backed by decades of saved petroleum revenues. The organization’s objectives include formulating and coordinating similar regulations in various fields such as religious, finance, trade ,customs, tourism (including archaeological sites), legislation, and administration. The GCC is also committed to fostering scientific and technical progress in industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources. Establishing scientific research centers, setting up joint ventures and encouraging



cooperation of the private sector also are among the GCC's goals, all with the aim of strengthening ties between their peoples.

During interviews with the author of this volume, GCC representatives appeared both serious and enthusiastic about the prospect of helping lead an international campaign to preserve and protect Syria and the world's cultural heritage. Moreover, they have pledged personnel and funding to help restore damaged sites.

### ***Non—Aligned Movement (NAM)***

NAM was jointly founded in 1961 in Belgrade by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru; Indonesia's first president, Sukarno; Egypt's Second President, Gamal Abdel Nasser; Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah; and Yugoslavia's President, Josip Tito. Its 120 member states and 17 observer countries declare that they are not formally aligned with any block, although in practice some members remain closely connected to one or another of the current major powers. Nonetheless, the movement, despite serious conflicts among its members (e.g. India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq), has for the most part been able to maintain cohesion. At the same time, some fracturing has occurred due to internal discord coupled with major power interdictions, such as when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and the US invaded Iraq in 2003.

NAM is currently chaired by Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in recent years it has criticized certain aspects of US foreign policy. The US invasion of Iraq and its "War on Terrorism", US attempts to stifle Iran and North Korea's nuclear plans, and certain other American actions have been denounced by some NAM members as attempts to run roughshod over the sovereignty of smaller nations.



What makes NAM a potentially key leader in the growing international movement to protect and preserve global cultural heritage sites is its oft—expressed concern for preservation as an essential pillar of human rights.

NAM promotes the universality of human rights, but resists cultural homogenization, and in line with its views on sovereignty, the organization appeals for the protection of cultural diversity as well as the safeguarding of our global cultural heritage .It also advocates tolerance for the religious, socio—cultural, and historical character and distinctions that define global human rights.

## **The Role of INTERPOL**

Illicit traffic in cultural heritage artifacts is a transnational crime that affects the countries of origin, transit and final destination. The International Criminal Police Organization) INTERPOL) plays a limited but important role in protecting and preserving Syria's cultural heritage, and its work warrants public support. The international demand for antiquities and works of art has recently seen a marked increase since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, partly due to lack of law enforcement in many areas of the country. Disturbing also is evidence that most of the stolen antiquities are being temporarily held back from the international market until intense scrutiny and focus on these artifacts "cools" and they can be transferred to clients, whether these may be museums, auction houses, investors or private collectors. Some of these players have a reputation for turning a blind eye to the provenance of high-priced stolen antiquities, and INTERPOL estimates that the value of trafficked art and antiquities is surpassed only by that of narcotics and weapons trafficking.

This illicit trade is also sustained by the growing demand from the arts market, the opening of Syria's borders, and the improvement in international transport systems, sometimes making use of facilities offered by international drug smuggling cartels and leveraging the political instability of certain adjacent countries. Working with national police agencies as well as art and antiquities dealers, INTERPOL plays an active role in the exchange of information so as to strengthen international police efforts against the erosion of our cultural heritage. Partnerships have also been formed with UNESCO, ICOM, the United Nations Organization for Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization.



# INTERPOL

To further these efforts, the INTERPOL General Secretariat has established a database available to the public that includes relevant information about stolen works, facilitating their identification and recovery. Located in Lyons, France, the General Secretariat also issues advisories and red alerts, including one issued in early 2014 on behalf of INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in Damascus appealing for help recovering mosaics stolen from the ruins of Apamee in the governorate of Hama.

### ***Private Researchers as Sleuths***

Researchers and antiquities scholars have increasingly performed valuable public services in this area themselves. Often working pro bono ,they are intensifying the examination of individual museums and private collections, looking for signs of looting and smuggling. For example ,Christopher Chippindale, curator of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology, and David Gill, an archaeologist at the University of Wales at Swansea, examined seven major antiquities collections for the American Journal of Archaeology in 2000. Approximately 75 percent of the 1,396 antiquities in the collections were found to be of unknown origin, with many surfacing for the first time following the enactment of national antiquities regulations. Most of the items they studied were found to have vague origins for the simple reason that they were obtained illegally. Many of them had no previous record of ownership at all. Bringing these facts before the public and their governments will hopefully result in intensified international penalties for lawbreakers.

### ***United Nations Appeal 2004—and 2014***

Iraq's antiquities crisis was precipitated by the 2003 Bush administration invasion and occupation, and it led to a Chapter 7 UN Security Council action to help preserve Iraq's cultural heritage. United Nations Security Council resolution 1546, adopted unanimously on 8 June 2004, stressed the need for all parties to respect and protect Iraq's archaeological, historical, cultural and religious heritage.

Similarly, UN Security Council Resolution 2139, adopted on 22 February, 2014 called upon "all parties to immediately end all violence which has led to human suffering in Syria, save Syria's rich societal mosaic and cultural heritage, and take appropriate steps to ensure protection of Syria's World Heritage Sites".

The following month, on March 12, 2014, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova and UN and League of Arab States Joint Special Representative to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi issued a joint statement demanding that the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage stop immediately. Their international communiqué declares:

As the people of Syria continue to endure incalculable human suffering and loss, their country's rich tapestry of cultural heritage is being ripped to shreds. World Heritage sites have suffered considerable and sometimes irreversible damage. Four of them are being used for military purposes or have been transformed into battlefields: Palmyra; the Krak des Chevaliers; the Saint Simeon Church in the Ancient villages of Northern Syria; and Aleppo, including the Aleppo Citadel. Archaeological sites are being systematically looted and the illicit trafficking of cultural objects has reached unprecedented levels. There are alarming reports that Syrian heritage has been deliberately targeted for ideological reasons. Human representations in art are being destroyed by extremist groups intent on eradicating unique testimonies of Syria's rich cultural diversity. All layers of Syrian culture are now under attack—including pre-Christian, Christian and Islamic.

The UN appeal called for all parties to immediately halt all destruction of Syrian heritage, and condemned the use of cultural sites for military

purposes .Also issued was a demand that parties to the conflict uphold international obligations, notably the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict and customary international humanitarian law.

Finally, the appeal concluded by issuing a global challenge to all countries and professional bodies involved in customs, trade and the art market, as well as individuals and tourists, to be on alert for stolen Syrian artifacts, to verify the origin of cultural property that might be illegally imported, exported and/or offered for sale ,and to adhere to the UNESCO 1970 Convention on illicit trafficking of cultural property:

“Our efforts to save Syria’s cultural heritage must be part of wider efforts to end violence and move to peace. Destroying the inheritance of the past robs future generations of a powerful legacy, deepens hatred and despair and undermines all attempts to foster reconciliation. Now is the time to stop the destruction, build peace and protect our common heritage”.

While Security Council Resolution 2139 is a significant step, it lacks enforcement powers that might have been invoked under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.

The United Nations considers the destruction of objects of cultural or religious heritage to be a signature feature of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The is the conclusion and analysis offered by a recent United Nations report published in 2014 by The Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, *“Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention ”*. The study concludes that attacks on cultural heritage, which are being committed today in the hundreds if not thousands in Syria are criminal conduct directed toward specific groups, civilians, and legally protected populations. This is a novel and welcomed application of international law in order to help protect our cultural heritage.

Several forms of threats to cultural and religious heritage are targeting Syria and are listed by the report which points to“ *the likelihood that certain actors are taking steps towards a scenario of mass violence and atrocity crimes ”*.These actions include“ *the*



*destruction or plundering of property related to cultural and religious identity* ”and well as attacks against or the destruction of cultural or religious symbols and property in Syria.

Other acts that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria according to the UN report are» Signs of patterns of violence against civilian populations, or against members of an identifiable group, their property, livelihoods and cultural or religious symbols«and» threats or appropriation, seizure, pillaging or intentional destruction or damage to property that either belong to, represent, or are part of the cultural, social or religious identity of those protected under international humanitarian law”.

The UN report also puts on notice all those individuals or entities receiving cultural property from Syria who fail to use rigorous due diligence to carefully evaluate how their acquisitions of conflict antiquities or wartime looted art contribute to atrocity crimes.

## ***UN Security Council Resolution on remedial measures to combat trafficking in Syrian cultural heritage***

On 2/10/2015 the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted UNSC Resolution 2199. Importantly, the UN took this urgent action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter which applies to threats to peace and security and allows for the UN to use armed force to implement its decision. The Resolution is a serious UN action to combat the trafficking in Syrian cultural heritage. It is designed to strangle the ability of armed gangs, looters and others to raise money through cultural heritage trafficking and other criminal sources like oil smuggling, kidnappings and ransom. Resolution 2199 requires Member States to improve international, regional, and sub regional cooperation, including increased sharing of information for the purpose of identifying smuggling routes and for Member States to consider provision of technical assistance and capacity building to assist other Member States to counter smuggling. Resolution 2199 condemns the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria whether such destruction is incidental or deliberate, including targeted destruction of religious sites and objects. The Security Council expressed its concern that certain groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida, are generating income from engaging directly or indirectly in the looting and smuggling of cultural heritage items from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites in Syria. These sites are being used to support terrorist recruitment efforts and strengthen their operational capability to organize and carry out terrorist attacks.

UNSC Resolution 2199 also reaffirms its decision in paragraph 7 of resolution 1483 (2003) and Requires that all Member States shall take appropriate steps to prevent the trade in Syrian cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific and religious importance illegally removed from Syria since 15 March 2011. This includes prohibiting cross border trade in such items, thereby facilitating their eventual safe return to the Syrian people and calls upon the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Interpol, and other international organizations, as appropriate, to assist in the Resolutions

implementation.

By imposing a new ban on the trade in smuggled Syrian antiquities, this resolution both cuts off a source of revenue to armed gangs and other looters and smugglers and helps protect our irreplaceable cultural heritage in the custody of the Syrian people.

### ***Regulatory Action Also Needed from U.S. Congress***

On the domestic level, the American government, in December of 2004, enacted the Emergency Protection of Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act (EPICAA) ,or HR1047, as it was adopted by the House of Representatives. This milestone legislation allows the President to impose import restrictions on any cultural materials illegally removed from Iraq, continuing a restriction on the import of such materials that had been in place since August 1990. It also activates a clause under the Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA), the U.S. legislation implementing the 1970 UNESCO Convention, making it possible for the White House to act without the need for Iraq to bring a request to the U.S. for import restrictions. EPICAA more broadly defines materials to be protected than CPIA normally does, extending coverage to all items of“ archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific or religious importance”.

EPICAA is an effective law, and the public should monitor its application and petition their congressional representatives to enact legislation achieving the same result for Syria’s cultural heritage. To this end ,the author of this volume, has drafted legislation giving the U.S. President authority with respect to the preservation of Syria’s cultural heritage. The draft, which in fact is currently pending in U.S. congressional offices, authorizes the President to impose emergency import restrictions on archaeological or ethnological materials from Syria. The President’s authority, outlined under section 2 of the measure, shall remain in effect until the Syrian government decides that its cultural heritage is secure.

### ***The draft reads as follows:***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled....

(a) AUTHORITY- The President may exercise the authority of the President under section 304 of the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 2603) with respect to any archaeological or ethnological material of the Syrian Arab Republic as if Syria were a State Party under that Act, except that, in exercising such authority, subsection) c) of such section shall not

apply.

(b) DEFINITION- In this section, the term‘ archaeological or ethnological material of Syria means cultural property of the Syrian Arab Republic and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, or religious importance illegally removed from any location inside Syria, including but not limited to, that country’s six UNESCO World Heritage Sites that have been placed on its endangered list :Ancient City of Aleppo ,(2013) Ancient City of Bosra ,(2013) Ancient City of Damascus (2013), the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria ,(2013) Krak des Chevaliers and Qal’at Salah El-Din ,(2013) and Palmyra.(2013)

A recently introduced bipartisan bill before the US Congress, H. R. 5703, on which the author consulted during its drafting, aims to sharpen the United States ’response to looting in Syria and other countries impacted by war, political instability, or natural disaster.

*The Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act* aims to“ deny terrorists and criminals the ability to profit from instability by looting the world of its greatest treasures ”.One of its declared raison d’etre of the proposed change in American law is the sense in Congress that“ Protecting international cultural property is a vital part of United States cultural diplomacy, showing the respect of the American people for other cultures and the common heritage of humanity. The sponsors claim that“ the destruction of the cultural properties in Syria represents an irreparable loss of humanity’s common cultural heritage and is therefore a loss for all Americans”.

Under its provisions, the White House will appoint a *Coordinator for International Cultural Property Protection* to oversee such efforts. It will require that the Secretary of State, the Administrator of USAID, the Secretary of Defense, and the Attorney General all submit reports on their department’s efforts to protect Syrian and other international cultural property to the new Coordinator. While many countries have offices and agencies dedicated to protecting their own cultural heritage ,the establishment of an official post to safeguard foreign cultural heritage is unprecedented and could have a significant impact.

In addition, the US President will be authorized by Congress to apply restrictions on importing items of“ archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific or religious importance unlawfully removed from Syria on or after

August 18, 2011. The bill also allows for any international agency involved in the protection of cultural heritage overseas to enter into agreements with the American Smithsonian Institution to use their personnel for assistance—even on military, diplomatic, and law enforcement missions. Additionally, the Secretary of State will be able to make grants to private individuals and organizations that are protecting cultural heritage where political instability or natural disasters threaten it. The proposed legislation, which can easily pass with White House and Congressional cooperation, would also mandate emergency protection for Syrian cultural property, imports of which rose 145% in the United States between 2011 and 2013 according to cultural heritage experts at Harvard University and UNESCO with whom this observer has consulted.

Some American political leaders are finally beginning to focus on this problem but they need more encouragement in the form of political pressure, from those who elect them. The White House and Congress must be pushed by public opinion to take immediate measures to stop the flow of stolen artifacts from Syria into our country. To their credit, Secretary of State John Kerry and President Barack Obama have spoken out in support of H.R. 5703. Last month at New York's Natural History Museum Kerry made an impassioned plea for his countrymen and all people of good will to join together to protect Syria's shared cultural heritage.

## ***International support for DGAM's work in protecting and preserving our Global Heritage in Syria***

No government or governmental agency anywhere is working more diligently and effectively to protect, preserve and restore Syria's global heritage than the Damascus—based Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums) DGAM .(Currently under the stellar leadership of Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim and his dedicated staff ,DGAM has taken an impressive and unprecedented range of effective steps in defense of the archaeological and architectural heritage that we all share. They have created a model for citizen awareness and involvement, seeking to involve all 23 million Syrians in protecting their shared heritage without regard to politics or sectarianism. DGAM has been indefatigable in its work, which over the past two years has included emptying museums of their treasures and storing them in secure places ,as well as dramatically increasing security at Syria's 32 national museums.

DGAM has also electronically recorded the contents of all of the Syrian Arab Republic's museums, and a DGAM team continues its work on an archival project that is charting the pre—crisis and current condition of the country's global archaeological heritage. But still there are challenges.

“The local people in Syria work hard to guard sites but the problem is Al-Qaeda affiliates ”,said one official in Homs“.These militia, and there seems to be more all the time, tend to be fanatics and are often deeply ignorant, especially about Islam. Our office receives reports that some of them confront museum curators and accuse them‘ ,You are the keeper of statues that are against religion””.

An attendant at the Palmyra Museum added“ ,These ideas are completely alien to Syria and her people. In Syria ,Muslims, both Sunni and Shiite, as well as Christians, have deep roots in the country and have always respected, along with each other's heritage, the country's pagan history from its centuries under the rule of ancient Persia ,Greece and Rome”.

The security situation is in a state of flux, but overall seems to be improving, and DGAM is working to meet the present and future challenges in a variety of ways. A design map of Syria's damaged cultural heritage,



based on the geographic information system, is being advanced by a team of DGAM specialists. The map will permit team members to identify their priorities regarding maintenance and restoration operations in the post—crisis reconstruction phase. Civil society organizations have become active as well in the rehabilitation of archaeological sites and national museums, and as a result of this a number of international partnerships have been formed, including with those involved in foreign archaeological expeditions. The latter, who have done valuable work on the sites, are expected to arrive in Syria in even greater numbers when security conditions permit, a development which could also help open Syria once more to tourism.

DGAM has coordinated its round—the—clock work with local communities, mediators and advocates, as well as social, religious and intellectual leaders, to protect hundreds of archaeological sites and to shield them from damage .DGAM continues to expand its work with INTERPOL, aiding with the recovery of cultural heritage artifacts damaged or looted due to the current crisis. More than one hundred such artifacts were confiscated on the Lebanese border in early 2014, and some 4000 have been returned over the past two years, items stolen from locations such as Damascus, Tartus ,Palmyra ,Homs ,Hama and Deir ez-Zor ,among other communities. DGAM also continues its essential work with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and also UNESCO, as it continues its work to have Syria sign the Second Protocol to The Hague Convention and the UNIDROIT conventions noted above.

As part of its campaign to keep the international community informed about the condition of its global heritage DGAM has launched a bi—lingual website ([www.dgam.gov.sy](http://www.dgam.gov.sy)) to keep us all up to date concerning the damage inflicted on Syria’s archaeological heritage during the crisis.

## Conclusion

To partner with, support and enhance DGAM's work, the involvement of international grass roots community activists is needed on many levels. For instance, all people of goodwill are asked to encourage their governments to support the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of a mandatory resolution banning illicit trafficking of Syria's cultural property. Such a measure should be adopted under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, invoking enforcement powers against those failing to comply. In addition, within each of our own, individual countries, a need exists, both now and in the future, to further address issues of theft and smuggling, with a view toward facilitating the recovery and return of stolen and smuggled artifacts. As part of this effort the governments of the countries bordering Syria—Iraq, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as the Zionist regime still occupying Palestine—must be required to control their borders and close them to smugglers and thieves.

Specialized agencies of the UN, including UNESCO, could also fulfill a need by providing satellite images and other relevant data to DGAM, fostering an exchange of information on damaged archaeological sites. UNESCO especially could help with this, and is urged to consider the safeguarding of Syria's cultural heritage as a top priority in the post—crisis period. UNESCO might, for instance, coordinate international assistance for restoration and repair, as well as establish a fund earmarked for Syria's sites, including its six archaeological sites that are listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Such endeavors would help expedite restoration projects that hopefully will get off the ground soon and that will lend impetus to the much—commended reconstruction work already done by DGAM in Homs Governorate, at the Krak des Chevaliers crusader castle, where DGAM has begun a restoration project of enormous dimensions.

It is the duty of every person of good will to offer assistance and support for efforts being undertaken in Syria and elsewhere to preserve and protect the Global Cultural Heritage of humanity.

Armed conflicts abound all about us these days. Today it is Syria; tomorrow it will be some other nation in some other region of the planet. The early years of the twenty—first century have been marked by these serial episodes of destruction, wars that in some cases have been fought under false

pretenses and for specious reasons. This has motivated many to ask“ ,What is truly going on ”?Unity can take place, but it does not automatically do so. While the causes of disputes are not always immediately decipherable to casual observers, we must not shrink from our inherited responsibilities—to preserve the past and to protect and safeguard the future, to the extent that we can.

# Appendix

*The following is a list of damaged archaeological heritage sites in Syria as gathered by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) in early 2014.*

## Initial Damage Assessments for Syrian Cultural Heritage as a result of the crisis

### Central Syria

N	Location	Site Name	Type of Damage
1	Hama	Hama Museum	Damages to the building + theft of bronze statue plated with gold
2	Hama Countryside	Apamee Museum	Stolen piece of marble from the museum's garden
3	Hama Countryside	Apamee	Illegal excavation in the East, N East and West with heavy machinery
4	Hama Countryside	Mudiq Castle	Bulldozing around the castle+ Gunmen settlement + Damage to the building
5	Hama Countryside	Taybat al-Imam Museum	Limited damage to the building
6	Hama Countryside	Shizar Castle	Limited damage to the building + Theft
7	Hama Countryside	Al-Andarin	Theft of archaeological stones for use in construction buildings +illegal excavation + Gunmen Settlement
8	Hama Countryside	Tell Qarqor	Bulldozing the hill
9	Hama Countryside	Tell Soha	Bulldozing in the area + soil removal
10	Hama Countryside	Qasr Ibn Wardan	Vandalism to the Palace's walls + theft
11	Hama Countryside	Tell Jdid	Bulldozing the hill
12	Hama	Tell Hasan Pasha	Bulldozing the hill

	Countryside		
13	Hama Countryside	Tell Abdul Aziz	Bulldozing the hill
14	Hama Countryside	Tell al-Aqareb	Bulldozing the hill
15	Hama Countryside	Tell Taybat al-Asm	Bulldozing the hill
16	Hama Countryside	Tell Ashareh	Illegal Buildings
1	Homs (al-Khalidiya)	Khalid Ibn al-Walid Mosque	Damages to the building
2	Homs	Homs Museum	Limited damage to the building
3	Old Homs	Sarraj Mosque	Serious damage to the building
4	Old Homs	Mustafa Pasha al-Husseini Mosque	Damages to the building
5	Old Homs	Okasha Mosque	Destroyed the minaret
6	Old Homs	Sheikh Musa al-Ashaari Mosque	Serious damage to the building
7	Old Homs	Sheikh Kamel Mosque	Limited damage to the building
8	Old Homs	Abdullah bin Masud Mosque	Damage to the minaret
9	Old Homs	Al-Awza'i Mosque	Serious damage to the building
10	Old Homs	Al-Nouri Mosque	Serious damage to the building
11	Old Homs	Dames Abo al-Hol Maqam	Serious damage to the building
12	Old Homs	Abu Thar al-Ghafari Mosque	Destroyed the minaret
13	Old Homs	Claa Humairi Mosque	Serious damage to the building
14	Old Homs	Al-Zawiya Mosque	Serious damage to the building
15	Old Homs	Omar al-Nabhan Mosque	Serious damage to the building
16	Old Homs	Um al-Zennar Church	Serious damage to the building
17	Old Homs	Souq complex	Serious damage to the building
18	Old Homs	Pasha Hammam	Serious damage to the building
19	Old Homs	Qadi Sabat	Serious damage to the building

20	Old Homs	Al-Husseini complex	Serious damage to the building
21	Old Homs	Al-Zahrawi Palace (Traditional Folk Museum)	Serious damage to the building
22	Old Homs	Agha Palace	Serious damage to the building
23	Old Homs	Fadayel Mosque	Serious damage to the building
24	Old Homs	Al-Asiati Hammam	Serious damage to the building
25	Old Homs	Jolia Palace	Serious damage to the building
26	Old Homs	Farkouh Palace	Serious damage to the building
27	Old Homs	Al-Trabelsi Palace	Serious damage to the building
28	Old Homs	Sarraj Hammam	Serious damage to the building
29	Old Homs	Al-Arbaeen Church	Serious damage to the building
30	Old Homs	Lady of Peace Church	Serious damage to the building
31	Old Homs	Syriac Catholic Church	Serious damage to the building
32	Old Homs	Evangelical Church	Serious damage to the building
33	Old Homs	Mar Elian Church	Serious damage to the building
34	Old Homs	Adulla Farkouh House	Serious damage to the building
35	Old Homs	Bismar House	Serious damage to the building
36	Old Homs	Kaab al-Ahbar Mosque	Serious damage to the building
37	Old Homs	Zawiya Sebat	Serious damage to the building
38	Old Homs	Restaurant + Café	Serious damage to the building
39	Homs countryside	Krak des Chevaliers	Damage to the King's tower- Southern towers- soldiers tower - chapel- entrance tower– and the exterior facades in the North area
40	Homs countryside	Saraya Church	Limited damage to the building
41	Homs countryside	Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi	Gunmen settlement
42	Homs countryside Saddad	The church	Damage to the building
43	Homs countryside	Al-Qusayr Mosque	Damage to the building



	Al-Qusayr		
44	Homs countryside Al-Qusayr	Train station	Damage to the building
45	Homs countryside	Tell Nabi Mando	Damage to the building
46	Homs countryside	Al- Qariaten	Removal of stones from Mar Elia Monastery and damage to the Temple
47	Palmyra	Temple of Bel	Damage to the interior wall in the western and southern façades and limited damage to the western, eastern, and northern walls, + damage to the columns in the southern arcade with two columns collapsing
48	Palmyra	Valley of the Tombs	Damage to the building + illegal excavation in the SE and SW tomb areas
49	Palmyra	Camp of Diocletian	Damage + illegal excavation
50	Palmyra	Palmyra Museum	Damage to the museum's wall
51	Palmyra	Archaeological area + buffer zone	Illegal buildings
52	Palmyra	Oasis	Oasis fires
53	Palmyra	Roman Theatre	Damage + theft
54	Palmyra	The Guest house	Damage + theft
55	Palmyra	The Greece House	Damage + theft
72	Total Damaged sites in central Syria		

Southern Syria			
N	Location	Site Name	Type of Damage
1	Damascus Countryside	Yabroud (Sahel site(	Illegal excavation
2	Damascus Countryside	Yabroud (Cathedral of Constantine and Helen(	Damage to the building

3	Damascus Countryside	Tell Sakka	Theft to the archaeological mission house
4	Damascus Countryside	Maaloula	Damage to the Mar Sarkis Monastery + traditional buildings
5	Damascus Countryside	Saidnaya Monastery	Damage to the building
6	Damascus Countryside	Khan Atna	Theft to the building
7	Damascus Countryside	Museum of Deir Atiyah	Damage to the building + theft of pistols, heritage shotguns and silver coins
8	Damascus Countryside	Jobar Synagogue	Gunmen settlement + Damage + Theft
9	Damascus Countryside	Qadam Mosque+ Shrine of al-Asali	Attacked by gunmen + damage
10	Damascus	Hijaz Station	Damages to the roof of the building
11	Damascus	Ghazi House (Antiquities of Damascus countryside(	Windows were blown + damage to the building
12	Damascus	Basrawi Mosque	Windows were blown + cracks to the minaret
13	Damascus	Interior Ministry Building	Windows were blown + cracks in façade
14	Damascus	Al-Midan	Several residential buildings burned and collapsed
15	Damascus	Al-Qanawat	4residential buildings and 7 shops burned + damage to3 residential buildings
16	Damascus	Sarouja	3residential buildings and 5 shops burned + stolen pieces of wooden painting from one of the houses
17	Damascus	Al-Malik Faisal Street	1shop + sawmill burned
18	Damascus	Al-Abed Building	Windows and wooden frames were blown + cracks in walls + walls collapsed
19	Old Damascus	The Citadel	Damage to the west façade of the eastern gate and the roof of the northern wall in the Royal

			Hall
20	Old Damascus	Umayyad mosque	Cracks in the to the southern wall + Damage to the mosaic in the Western façade
21	Old Damascus	Great Madrasa Al-Adliya	Minor Damage to the facade
22	Old Damascus	Azem Palace	Minor damage in the roof
23	Old Damascus	Bab Tuma	Minor damage to several buildings
24	Old Damascus	Al-Asrounya	Minor damage to several shops
25	Old Damascus	Medhat Pasha Souk	Minor damage to 26 shops+ 2 residential buildings + al-Amin Hotel + Zaitoon Patriarchate+ al-Habwbi Mosque
26	Old Damascus	Al-Hariqa Souq	Damage to one of the buildings
27	Old Damascus	Al-Shaghour al- Hakar Aly(	Damage to the buildings
28	Old Damascus	Al-Hamrawi District	Damage to one of the buildings
29	Old Damascus	Al-Amin District	Cracks to the buildings walls
30	Old Damascus	Misquia Square	Damage to the basalt floor
1	Daraa al-Balad	Omari Mosque	Serious damage to the building
2	Daraa al-Balad	Sheikh Khalil Mosque	Destroyed the minaret
3	Daraa al-Balad	Al-Karak Mosque	Destroyed the minaret
4	Daraa Countryside	Omari Mosque -al Hraak	Damage to the walls and ceiling
5	Daraa Countryside	The Old Mosque - Sheikh Meskeen	Destroyed the minaret
6	Daraa Countryside	The Old Mosque- Mahajja	Destroyed the minaret

7	Daraa Countryside	Dael	Several old residential buildings collapsed
8	Daraa Countryside	Nawa	Several old residential buildings collapsed
9	Daraa Countryside	Tell Ashaari	Illegal Excavation at the top of the Tell in the East and South
10	Daraa Countryside	Lajat	Damage to the cultural landscape
11	Daraa Countryside	Kafer Shams )Kherbet Maliha(	Illegal Excavation
12	Daraa Countryside	Mzareeb castle	Excavation in the castle + Removing ancient stone
13	Daraa Countryside	Wadi Yarmuk – Tell Shhab	Remove ancient residential buildings
14	Daraa Countryside	Kherbet Nahj	Illegal excavation by means of heavy machinery
15	Daraa Countryside	Kharab al-Shahm	Illegal excavation+
16	Daraa Countryside	Al-Yadouda	Digging and filling holes are taking place in the old houses
17	Daraa Countryside	Beit Ara'a (old town)	Illegal excavation
18	Daraa Countryside	Kherbet Kom al-Jouz	Illegal excavation
19	Daraa Countryside	Al-Qasair	Illegal excavation
20	Daraa Countryside	Kherbet al-Bala	Illegal excavation
21	Daraa Countryside	Old Qarea	Illegal excavation
22	Daraa Countryside	Wadi Heet al-Jusoor (al-Areeb Bridge – al-Dora Bridge(	Illegal excavation
23	Daraa Countryside	Heet	Illegal excavation near the mosaic area+ damage to the mosaic
24	Bosra	The Amphitheatre	Limited damage to the building
25	Bosra	Al-Kolaibeh	

26	Bosra	Monastery of Bahira	Limited damage to the building
27	Bosra	Fatima Mosque	Limited damage to the building
28	Bosra	Sergius Church	Limited damage to the building
29	Bosra	Mabrak al-Naqah Mosque	Limited damage to the building
30	Bosra	Eastern pool	Limited damage to the pool's walls
31	Bosra	The Cemetery	Illegal excavation
32	Bosra	Traditional residential buildings	Several old residential buildings collapsed
62	Total Damaged to the Archaeological Sites in southern Syria		

Eastern Syria			
N	Location	Site Name	Type of Damage
1	Raqqa	The Museum	Stolen 9 boxes of artifacts
2	Raqqa Countryside	Storehouse of Herqla	Break—ins and theft of hundreds of artifacts
3	Raqqa Countryside	Jaabar Castle	Gunmen settlement + theft of 17 pieces of artifacts
4	Raqqa Countryside	Tell Shaheen	Illegal Excavation + violence
5	Raqqa Countryside	Tell Hammam al-Turkman	Illegal excavation by means of heavy machinery
6	Raqqa Countryside	Tell al-Mafsh	Illegal excavation + violence
7	Raqqa Countryside	Al-Ateek Mosque - al-Mansour Mosque	Illegal excavation by means of heavy machinery
8	Raqqa Countryside	Maqam Wabesa	Illegal excavation + Violence
9	Raqqa Countryside	Sheikh Hassan	Illegal excavation + Violence

10	Raqqa Countryside	Tell al-Sabi al-Abyad	Illegal excavation
11	Raqqa Countryside	Maadan Desert	Illegal excavation + Violence
1	Deir ez-Zor	Traditional Folk Museum	Damage to the building
2	Deir ez-Zor	The Museum	Damage to the building
3	Deir ez-Zor	Omari Mosque	Limited damage to the minaret
4	Deir ez-Zor	Suspension Bridge	Serious damage to the bridge
5	Deir ez-Zor	Al-Rawi Takkia	Completely destroyed minaret+ damage to the building
6	Deir ez-Zor	Cairo's Winter Restaurant	Damage to the building
7	Deir ez-Zor	Khan Awlad Knagh	Damage to the building
8	Deir ez-Zor	Khan Awlad al-Josa (in the ancient Souq(	Completely destroyed
9	Deir ez-Zor	Ancient Souq) al-Qasabin, al-Khashabin, al-Zalam, Ottoman Gate, al-Attarin(	Serious damage to the building + digging underground Tunnels
10	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Dura Europos	Illegal excavations using heavy machinery, particularly in Beit Lysias, the markets, the public baths and the synagogue, as well as the archaeological buildings within the site + theft to the visitor center + theft of the red rocks within the sector of the Temple of Bel
11	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Mari	Illegal excavation, plunder and vandalism in the Royal Palace, theft to the visitor center and the archaeological mission accommodation
12	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Sheikh Hamad	Illegal excavation + theft to the archaeological mission accommodation
	Deir ez-Zor		Illegal excavation in the

13	countryside	Tell es-Sin	Byzantine cemetery
14	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Halbia	Illegal excavations using heavy machinery in the area of the north tower + theft to the protective doors of the gates and the excavation tools + destruction of Maqam Sheikh Shibli + illegal buildings
15	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Al-Busayrah + Khabour Hills	Illegal buildings + destruction of Maqam Sheikh Issa + illegal buildings
16	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Al-Marwanyia hills	Illegal excavations using heavy machinery
17	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Rahba Castle	Damage to the building
18	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell al-Kasra	Destruction and theft of the bricks in the Byzantine public baths within the site.
19	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Gleb al-Homa	Random digs carried out by armed thieves using machines
20	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Tabous	Illegal excavation + theft + violence
21	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Ayash	Illegal excavation
22	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell al-Roum	Illegal excavation
23	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Humeida	Illegal excavation
24	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Fadin Hills	Illegal excavation using heavy machinery
25	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell al-Khan	Completely destroyed
26	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell al-Sour	Illegal excavation
27	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Hasin	Illegal excavation + selling artifacts
28	Deir ez-Zor countryside	Tell Ashara	Violation of part of the Tell
1	Hasakah	Tell Ajaja	Illegal excavation
2	Hasakah	Tell Mozan	Gunmen Settlement

3	Hasakah	Tell Brak	Theft to the residence of the archaeological mission + illegal excavation with heavy machinery
4	Hasakah	Tell Shaghar Bazar	Gunmen settlement
43	Total Damaged to the Archaeological Sites in eastern Syria		

Northern Syria			
N	Location	Site Name	Type of Damage
1	Aleppo	The Museum	Damage to the building
2	Old Aleppo	The Citadel's entrance+ North Tower	Damage to the building
3	Old Aleppo	Traditional Folk Museum (Beit Ajqabash)	Serious damage to the building + theft of artifacts
4	Old Aleppo	Umayyed Mosque	Destruction of the minaret + serious damage to the building
5	Old Aleppo	Bab Antakiya Souq	Shops burned
6	Old Aleppo	Khan Tetoun	Shops burned
7	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Behramiyeh	Shops burned
8	Old Aleppo	Souq Khan al-Jumrok	Shops burned
9	Old Aleppo	Souq al Saktia	Shops burned
10	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Atiqa	Shops burned
11	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Hoor	Shops burned
12	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Jenfas	Shops burned
13	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Sham	Shops burned
14	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Srmattia	Shops burned
15	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Habbal	Shops burned
16	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Joukh	Shops burned
17	Old Aleppo	Souq Istanbul	Shops burned
18	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Batnieh	Shops burned
19	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Akkadin	Shops burned
20	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Hammam	Shops burned
21	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Attareen	Shops burned
22	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Draa	Shops burned
23	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Trabishieh	Shops burned



24	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Bazerjeh	Shops burned
25	Old Aleppo	Souq as-Siyyagh	Shops burned
26	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Manadil	Shops burned
27	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Hrajj	Shops burned
28	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Saboun	Shops burned
29	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Dahshaa	Shops burned
30	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Abi	Shops burned
31	Old Aleppo	Souq Qara Kamash	Shops burned
32	Old Aleppo	Suweiq	Shops burned
33	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Zerb	Shops burned
34	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Titin	Shops burned
35	Old Aleppo	Souq Khan al-Jumrok	Shops burned
36	Old Aleppo	Souq Khan al-Nahhaseen	Shops burned
37	Old Aleppo	Khan al-Saboun	Shops burned
38	Old Aleppo	Khan al-Kittan	Shops burned
39	Old Aleppo	Khan al-Wazir	Shops burned
40	Old Aleppo	Khan Khayr Biek	Shops burned
41	Old Aleppo	al-Kameliyah Zawiya	Damage to the building
42	Old Aleppo	Khan al-Khiesh	Damage to the building
43	Old Aleppo	Khan al-Karkanawi	Damage to the building
44	Old Aleppo	Khan al-Harir	Damage to the building
45	Old Aleppo	Bahramieh Mosque	Damage to the building
46	Old Aleppo	Al-Ahmadiyeh Madrasa	Damage to the building
47	Old Aleppo	Hammam al-Nahhaseen	Damage to the building
48	Old Aleppo	Al-Sharafiyah Madrasa	Damage to the building
49	Old Aleppo	Waqf Library	Damage to the building
50	Old Aleppo	Al-Fustuq Mosque	Damage to the building
51	Old Aleppo	Aslan Dadah Mosque	Damage to the building
52	Old Aleppo	Dar al-Fatwa	Damage to the building
53	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2305	Damage to the building
54	Old Aleppo	Bimaristan Arghun/ Museum of Medicine and Science	Damage to the building

55	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1111	Damage to the building
56	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1112	Damage to the building
57	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1115	Damage to the building
58	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2857	Damage to the building
59	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2858	Damage to the building
60	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2859	Damage to the building
61	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2861	Damage to the building
62	Old Aleppo	Private Estate2862	Damage to the building
63	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2864	Damage to the building
64	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2867	Damage to the building
65	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2977	Damage to the building
66	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2978	Damage to the building
67	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2980	Damage to the building
68	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 207	Damage to the building
69	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 229	Damage to the building
70	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 230	Damage to the building
71	Old Aleppo	Private Estate231	Damage to the building
72	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 234	Damage to the building
73	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 275	Damage to the building
74	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 292	Damage to the building
75	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 293	Damage to the building
76	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 514	Damage to the building
77	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2592	Damage to the building
78	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2593	Damage to the building
79	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2095	Damage to the building
80	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2096	Damage to the building
81	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2097	Damage to the building
82	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2098	Damage to the building
83	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2633	Damage to the building
84	Old Aleppo	Private Estate2634	Damage to the building
85	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2635	Damage to the building
86	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2636	Damage to the building

87	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2643	Damage to the building
88	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2644	Damage to the building
89	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2645	Damage to the building
90	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2646	Damage to the building
91	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2647	Damage to the building
92	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2654	Damage to the building
93	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2656	Damage to the building
94	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2800	Damage to the building
95	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2861	Damage to the building
96	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2862	Damage to the building
97	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1284	Damage to the building
98	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2288	Damage to the building
99	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 2289	Damage to the building
100	Old Aleppo	Beit Ghazaleh (Folk Traditional Museum)	Damage to the building
101	Old Aleppo	Catholic Church	Damage to the building
102	Old Aleppo	Maronite Church	Damage to the building
103	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1442	Damage to the building
104	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1486	Damage to the building
105	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 3251	Damage to the building
106	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 3261	Damage to the building
107	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 3262	Damage to the building
108	Old Aleppo	Abdul Mounem Riyad Residents	Damage to the building
109	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1725	Damage to the building
110	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1730	Damage to the building
111	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1747	Damage to the building
112	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 1804	Damage to the building
113	Old Aleppo	Al-Aqsarawi Mosque	Damage to the building
114	Old Aleppo	Private Estate	Damage to the building
115	Old Aleppo	Al-Mahmandar Mosque	
116	Old Aleppo	Private Estate	Damage to the building
117	Old Aleppo	Private Estate	Damage to the building
118	Old Aleppo	Private Estate	Damage to the building
119	Old Aleppo	Private Estate	Damage to the building

120	Old Aleppo	Passports & Immigration building	Damage to the building
121	Old Aleppo	Al-Haddadin Mosque	Damage to the building
122	Old Aleppo	Bab al-Hadid	Damage to the building
123	Old Aleppo	Private Estate	Damage to the building
124	Old Aleppo	Naqosa Mosque	Damage to the building
125	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 972	Damage to the building
126	Old Aleppo	Private Estate 976	Damage to the building
127	Old Aleppo	Souq al-Ghazal Hammam	Damage to the building
128	Old Aleppo	Al-Shibani Church	
129	Old Aleppo	Toot Mosque	Damage to the building
130	Old Aleppo	Justice Palace	Damage to the building
131	Old Aleppo	Carleton Hotel	Levelled by bombing
132	Old Aleppo	Al-Adiliyah Mosque	Damage to the building and the minaret
133	Old Aleppo	Qastal Harami Mosque	Damage to the building
134	Old Aleppo	Al-Halawiyah Madrasa	Damage to the building
135	Old Aleppo	Al-Firdaws Madrasa	Damage to the building + Destruction of minaret
136	Old Aleppo	Othmaniya Mosque	Damage to the building and the minaret
137	Old Aleppo	Bogha House	Damage to the building + Stolen artifacts
138	Old Aleppo	Masaken Hanano	Damage to the building
139	Old Aleppo	Shaibieh Mosque	Minor damage in the entrance
140	Old Aleppo	Dar Jinblaat	Damage to the building
141	Old Aleppo	Al-Otrush Mosque	Damage to the building
142	Old Aleppo	Sahet al-Maleh Mosque	Damage to the building
143	Old Aleppo	Al-Ajami Restaurant	Damage to the building
144	Old Aleppo	Police building	Damage to the building
145	Aleppo Countryside	Dederiyeh Cave	Sabotage to the excavation area and archaeological sectors
146	Aleppo Countryside	Nabi Hory	Illegal excavation
147	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Sallour	Illegal excavation
148	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Shaieer	Illegal excavation

149	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Alam	Illegal excavation
150	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Blat	Illegal excavation
151	Aleppo Countryside	Al-Safira	Illegal excavation
152	Aleppo Countryside	Tell al-Hajar	Illegal excavation
153	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Rifaat	Illegal excavation
154	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Ezaz	Illegal excavation
155	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Ahmar	Illegal excavation+ illegal construction +cultivation in some parts of the hill
156	Aleppo Countryside	Shaykh Barakat (Ancient Villages)	Opened illegal quarries + illegal buildings + destruction of the ancient foundations
157	Aleppo Countryside	Brad (Ancient Villages)	Illegal building using ancient stones + damage to the portable church
158	Aleppo Countryside	Batotta (Ancient Villages)	Illegal buildings + illegal excavation + removal of ancient stones outside the site
159	Aleppo Countryside	Sinkhar (Ancient Villages)	Illegal buildings + illegal excavation + removal of ancient stones outside the site
160	Aleppo Countryside	Shaykh Suleiman) Ancient Villages(	Illegal buildings + illegal excavation + removal of ancient stones outside the site
161	Aleppo Countryside	Simeon Castle (Ancient Villages)	Gunmen settlement + damage to the building + illegal excavation + destruction of the archaeological scene
162	Aleppo Countryside	Kalota (Ancient Villages)	Illegal buildings by using ancient stones
163	Aleppo Countryside	Rafadeh (Ancient Villages)	Destroying the archaeological scene + removed and sold ancient stone to be used for construction
164	Aleppo Countryside	Sitt er-rum (Ancient Villages)	Destroying the archaeological scene + removed and sold ancient stone to be used for construction
165	Aleppo Countryside	Qatora (Ancient Villages)	Destroying the archaeological scene

166	Aleppo Countryside	Khalkis (Qinnasrin)	Illegal excavation + violence
167	Aleppo Countryside	Khan al-Asal	Illegal excavation + violence
168	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Nabbul	Illegal excavation + violence
169	Aleppo Countryside	Ayn al-Arab (Sarin)	Illegal excavation + damage to the top of the tower's tomb
170	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Arab Hassan	Extensive excavations by thieves throughout entire surroundings
171	Aleppo Countryside	Kherbet Alabash	Most of the caves have been exposed to opening and excavation
172	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Halula	Thieves destroyed the mud room built at the site
173	Aleppo Countryside	Tell al-Aber	Illegal construction + growing trees within the excavation's areas.
174	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Abu Qalqal	Excavation and digs within rubble layers
175	Aleppo Countryside	Um al-Sarj	Illegal excavation in the southern towers
176	Aleppo Countryside	Monastery of Deir Qanshara	Illegal excavation + damage to the walls and to decorative elements carved on the walls of the monastery
177	Aleppo Countryside	Al-Nabgha site	Damage to the mosaic panel + theft from the zinc room built above the panel
178	Aleppo Countryside	Shaqla	Extensive excavations + destruction of stone foundations.
179	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Yasti	Plowing + growing olive trees
180	Aleppo Countryside	Kherbet Nafakh	Illegal excavation + illegal construction
181	Aleppo Countryside	Tell al-Zanqal	Minor excavations within the rubble layers
182	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Shiyukh Foqani	Illegal excavation
183	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Khamis	Minor excavations within the rubble layers
184	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Shiyukh Tahtani (Jarablos)	Illegal excavation carried out by armed gangs using heavy machinery + illegal construction near the hill + leveling of some part of the hill using a bulldozer + damage to the top of the towers
	Aleppo		Plowing + cultivation of barley and olive

185	Countryside	Tell al-Rafee	trees
186	Aleppo Countryside	Al-Hoshariya	Illegal excavation + many caves used as houses + cemeteries opened
187	Aleppo Countryside	Al-Halonji Castle	Illegal excavation
188	Aleppo Countryside	The church at the monastery in Khanaser	Theft from the mosaic panel
189	Aleppo Countryside	Khanaser	Illegal excavation
190	Aleppo Countryside	Tabbet Manbej	Digs throughout surroundings within homes
191	Aleppo Countryside	Tell al- Qaramel	Illegal excavation + destruction of the site with heavy machinery
192	Aleppo Countryside	Tell Shash Hamdan	Violence + destruction of most of its unique elements
1	Idlib	The Museum	Damage to the building
2	Idlib Countryside	Ras el-Ein (Tell Khatra(	Illegal excavation
3	Idlib Countryside	Kimnas	Stolen DGAM's store house
4	Idlib Countryside	Al-Dana	Illegal excavation near the al-Hakim tower
5	Idlib Countryside	Tefaha castle (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
6	Idlib Countryside	Tell Maaez (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
7	Idlib Countryside	Kafer Aqab (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
8	Idlib Countryside	Banasra (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
9	Idlib Countryside	Qalb Lozeh (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
10	Idlib Countryside	Qirqbize (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
11	Idlib Countryside	Al-Kfier (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
12	Idlib Countryside	Mazuqa Tomb) al-Bara-Ancient Villages(	3stone sarcophagi broken inside the pyramid tomb, gate lintel and the door of an olive oil mill + theft of four historic crowns + damage to the east and west façades + illegal buildings

13	Idlib Countryside	Al-Bara (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + illegal buildings+ damage to the Abi Sufyan Castle, the pyramidal burial chamber (known as Sawmaa), the eastern façade of one of the five churches and the eastern façade of the monastery +damage to part of the monastery's wall
14	Idlib Countryside	Sergella) Ancient Villages(	Broken sarcophagus and sign boards+ lodging residents in the site + theft to the equipment
15	Idlib Countryside	Majlaya (Ancient Villages(	Illegal excavation + illegal buildings + residents lodging in caves
16	Idlib Countryside	Wadi Martahun (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + residents lodging in caves
17	Idlib Countryside	Bterssa (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + illegal buildings+ residents lodging in caves
18	Idlib Countryside	Bshilla (Ancient Villages)	Illegal Excavation
19	Idlib Countryside	DeLozeh (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + construction of 4 electric poles
20	Idlib Countryside	Bauda (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + illegal buildings + residents lodging in caves
21	Idlib Countryside	Jarada (Ancient Villages(	Illegal buildings + damage to the facades
22	Idlib Countryside	al Rweha (Ancient Villages)	Illegal buildings + damage to the facades + destruction of ancient wall
23	Idlib Countryside	Al Fasouq (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation
24	Idlib Countryside	Brish (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + damage to the cemetery
25	Idlib Countryside	Baqirha (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + destruction of ancient stones
26	Idlib Countryside	Dar Qita (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + destruction of ancient stones
27	Idlib Countryside	Derouna (Ancient Villages(	Illegal excavation + destruction of ancient stones near the church
28	Idlib Countryside	Kherbet al-Khatib (Ancient Villages)	Illegal excavation + destruction of ancient stones
30	Idlib Countryside	Der Termanin	Destruction of the eastern wall of the church
31	Idlib Countryside	Tell Toukan	Theft from archaeological mission accommodation
32	Idlib Countryside	Tell Afes	Theft from archaeological mission accommodation



33	Idlib Countryside	Tell Shekh Mansour	Illegal excavation
34	Idlib Countryside	Ebla	Illegal excavations using heavy machinery in the Acropolis, Northern Palace ,Southern Palace, Temple of the Rock, Royal Palace +Damage to the modern facilities of the site +Gunmen Settlement
35	Idlib Countryside	Sakik	Illegal excavation + destruction of ancient stones
36	Idlib Countryside	Al-Tarnieh Castle	Illegal excavation + theft to the DGAM store—house
37	Idlib Countryside	Ein Lazour	Illegal excavation near the palace in the south of the village
38	Idlib Countryside	Sarmin	Damage to the building + destruction of the top of the minaret and the southern wall
39	Idlib Countryside	Tell al-Karkh	Theft to artifacts and equipment
40	Idlib Countryside	Harem Castle	Damage to the building
41	Idlib Countryside	Two churches and monastery of al-Jadida village	Destruction of all crosses and icons+ theft of 11 archaeological icons
42	Idlib Countryside	Farmieh Castle	Illegal excavation
1	Maarrat al-Nu'man	The citadel	Minor damage to the building
2	Maarrat al-Nu'man	Omar Ibn Abdulaziz Maqam	Minor damage to the building
3	Maarrat al-Nu'man	Al-Kabir Mosque	Minor damage to the building
4	Maarrat al-Nu'man	Saraya building	Minor damage to the building
5	Maarrat al-Nu'man	Assad Pasha Khan	Minor damage to the building
6	Maarrat al-Nu'man	The Museum (Murad Pasha Khan)	Minor damage to the building + theft of 30 pieces of artifacts + Gunmen settlement
240	Total Damage to archaeological sites in northern Syria		

Western Syria			
N	Location	Site Name	Type of Damage
1	Latakia	Tell Erbes	Illegal excavation
2	Tartus	Azar tombs	Illegal excavation

3	Tartus	Marqab Castle	Illegal excavation + damage to the building
3	<b>Total Damage to the archaeological sites in western Syria</b>		
420	<b>Total Damaged to the Archaeological Sites in Syria</b>		

Source of Information :Department of Antiquities + Social Media

## **Satellite pictures to monitor cultural heritage damage in Syria**

High-resolution Satellites are being used increasingly to monitor damage to cultural heritage sites in Syria and they are providing some of the most accurate information. Given the many current impediments for archeologists accessing the more than 20,000 archeological sites due to the continuing armed conflict, satellite imaging is becoming the norm. Satellite imagery is often one of a few sources even available for objective information over conflict-areas because independent experts have little or no access to these areas due to fighting in the area. The imagery taken from space therefore brings timely evidence of what is happening and covers large areas to ensure comprehensive monitoring and assessment.

Among the advantages offered by satellites are the objective detailed information over areas of restricted on—site access due to security considerations and cultural heritage areas located across Syria can be photographed in a short amount of time .In addition, by creating satellite imagery databases it allows for the ability to go back in time and compare the status of cultural heritage areas during different time intervals. This allows for comparisons of the archeological site including the condition of the site prior to the conflict.

Satellite imaging is sometimes ineffective due to cloud covers or its effective limited by the fact that damage to archeological sites can only be observed from a spatial level of approximately 50 cm. Consequently, walls and structures with limited damage can be difficult to detect. In these cases Satellite assessments are in effect a conservative estimate of the actual damage on the ground.

A number of reports summarizing damage to Syria's cultural heritage have appeared since the onset of the conflict in Syria in 2011. To date, overviews have been published on World Heritage sites on the subjects of the destruction of museums, historic structures, and archaeological sites. These include periodic reports by UNESCO, governmental, and non—governmental organizations, activist groups, and scholarly articles. But until recently none

included the use of Satellite imaging, often due to the cost and other restraints.

Both of the projects noted below seek to reveal the status of the six Syrian World Heritage sites and many others using pre—conflict imagery coupled with the most recently collected high—resolution satellite images available. The results make plain that five of the six Syrian World Heritage sites have sustained visible damage since the start of the conflict, with the Ancient City of Damascus being the only site without visible damage. As noted above there are forms of damage that are not visible from space, due to a variety of reasons, including limited sensor resolution; such as; the layout of the sites, particularly in urban areas; and the materials employed for construction.



Satellite images of the Ancient City of Aleppo before and after the destruction

These satellite imagery studies using satellites have in the opinion of the author provided the most accurate assessment of damage and looting at cultural heritage sites in Syria. One is an indepth project entitled, Ancient History, Modern Destruction: Assessing the Current Status of Syria's World Heritage Sites Using High—Resolution Satellite Imagery. It is authored and edited by the staff of the Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project (<http://www.aaas.org/geotech>) as part of the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

The AAAS satellite survey sought to determine the current status of Syria's UNESCO designated World Heritage including the Ancient City of Aleppo, the Ancient City of Bosra, the Ancient City of Damascus, the Ancient Site of Palmyra, the Ancient Cities of Northern Syria ,and Krak des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El-Din. It produced an overview report of the Syrian World Heritage sites as the first in a series of reports that AAAS has plans for that will examine damage to cultural heritage sites throughout the country, as well

as assess risk factors for further damage. AAAS previously released reports on the conflict in Aleppo, which included an analysis of damage to the World Heritage area. However, no work to date has documented the extent of damage to all of Syria's World Heritage sites using recent high—resolution satellite imagery coupled with news media, social media, and verified, on —the—ground information .

Another much credited study is the recently completed UNITAR Satellite —based Damage Assessment to Cultural Heritage Sites in Syria.

Since the beginning of the current crisis in Syria in March of 2011, perhaps the main source of Satellite—based Damage Assessment to historical sites in Syria has been the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and its Operational Satellite Applications Program (UNOSAT). One of its projects has been to monitor UN Security Council resolution 2139 on humanitarian access in Syria. In the course of its work UNOSAT has been using detailed satellite imagery covering large areas in Syria in order to assess damage to building infrastructure and road networks .From the beginning of its work on Syria, UNOSAT's expert analysts observed widespread damage to structures and objects located inside important cultural heritage sites. Dismayed by what its satellite images were revealing, UNOSAT decided to issue a separate report on Syrian cultural heritage sites. The project combined in—house expert

Satellite analysts with international expertise on cultural heritage in Syria and the team. assessed scores of media reports and testimony from eyewitnesses inside Syria in order to ensure satellite imagery from relevant time—periods were analyzed. In many cases, the UNOSAT study was able to pin—point its satellite imagery to specific events in the current conflict for which videos exist on YouTube.



Satellite images of the Ancient City of Palmyra (North & Northwest Necropolis) before and after the destruction

On 12/23/2015, UNITAR released a comprehensive report by its UNOSAT

program that has revealed large scale destruction and damage to cultural heritage sites in Syria, including UNESCO World Heritage Properties. The study, carried out by experts on Syria cultural heritage and UNOSAT satellite image analysts, reviewed 18 different areas inside which a total of 290 locations were found to be directly affected by the ongoing conflict. Of this number:

- 24sites were destroyed
- 104severely damaged
- 85moderately damaged
- 77lightly damaged

UNOSAT based its analysis on a combination of commercially available very high resolution satellite images, UNESCO reports, information from archaeological experts on Syria as well as traditional and social media.

Old City of Aleppo: Multiple historical sites can be seen destroyed in this image as of 22 October 2014, such as the Carlton hotel, where craters are present. Other damaged locations include the Great Umayyad Mosque in the lower right corner of the image .The Great Mosque's minaret has been destroyed, in addition to severe damages to the wall and courtyard .



Satellite images of Raqqa city (Shrine to Uwais Al-Qurani and Ammar Bin Yasser)  
Before and after the destruction

According to Einar Bjorgo, UNOSAT's manager“ This is alarming testimony of the ongoing damage that is happening to Syria's vast cultural heritage and we believe it is important to issue a comprehensive status report to alert decision—makers and the public about the deterioration to many of the rich cultural heritage areas in Syria. The wide—spread destruction and damage we have observed call for increased protection efforts and support to the ongoing work of UNESCO”.

The above noted satellite studies represent the increasing number of

national and international efforts for the protection of these areas need to be scaled up in order to save as much as possible of our global cultural heritage in Syria. The objective is to create a record of damage to each site ,which will aid in a better understanding of how heritage destruction is implicated in the trajectory of these types of conflicts and will enable U.S. policymakers and other humanitarian agencies working in conflict zones to design more effective interventions.



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# About the Author



The author with his son, Alistair Xavier Lamb, next to war damage and above the moat of the 11th century Krak des Chevaliers crusader castle on February 9, 2014.

Born and raised in Oregon, Franklin Lamb served as Assistant Counsel of the House Judiciary Committee in the US Congress after earning his law degree from Boston University School of Law as well as LLM, M.Phil, and PhD. Degrees from the London School of Economics (LSE) as well as the University College London (UCL) Diploma in International Air & Space law. He subsequently completed post-doctoral studies at Harvard University Law School's East Asian Legal Studies Center where he specialized in Chinese Law, as well as International legal studies at Cambridge University in the UK and two summers studying Public International Law at The Hague Academy of International Law at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands.

In 1980 Dr. Lamb was elected to a four year term from Oregon to the Democratic National Committee while working on the campaign Issues staff for Presidential candidate Edward M. Kennedy. He served on the 15—member Democratic Party Judicial Counsel and was subsequently elected Chairman of the 1980 DNC Platform Committee on East—West Relations.

In January 1983 Lamb was a witness before the Kahan Commission of Inquiry into the massacre at the Sabra—Shatila Refugee Camp in Beirut held

at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. His testimony focused on three types of American cluster bombs (M-42, M-43 ‘Butterfly’, and M-46) that were among the nine types given by President Richard Nixon to Golda Meir during the October 1973 Ramadan War. Thousands of American anti-personnel bomb live units (BLU’s) were transferred, in violation of American law on orders from Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to Christian militia during the summer of 1982. Some were then used to booby-trap some of the victims’ bodies during the September 1982 massacre at Shatila camp. The American government has never sanctioned Israel for any of its dozens of illegal transfers of US weapons. In early 1983 The Kahan Commission found that Ariel Sharon “bears personal responsibility for ignoring the danger of bloodshed and revenge «and for» not taking appropriate measures to prevent bloodshed«.

Lamb’s books include *Pollution as a Problem of International Law* PhD. Thesis published by the University of London, (1976) *International Legal Responsibility for the Sabra—Shatila Massacre* (1983), published by Imp. TIPOE: 42 rue Lebour 93100 Montreuil, France (5th printing 2014 in Arabic and English), *Israel’s War in Lebanon: Eyewitness Chronicles of the Invasion and Occupation*. Foreword by Sean MacBride, Boston: South End Press and Spokesman, 2nd. Edition 1984. (Reprinted, 2014) First Edition published as *Reason Not the Need: Eyewitness Chronicles of Israel’s War in Lebanon*, UK: Spokesman, 1984. *The Price We Pay: A Quarter—Century of Israel’s Use of American Weapons against Civilians in Lebanon* (2006) is available at Amazon.com in Arabic and English. His latest book, *Syria’s Endangered Heritage: An International Responsibility to Protect and Preserve* (2015) is available in Arabic and English.

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